

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1090.—VOL. XLII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING MARCH 22, 1884.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["IF YOU KNOW THE SECRET, FOR MEROY'S SAKE TELL ME," PLEADED ELEANOR.."]

LADY RAVENHILL'S SECRET.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

FRESH from her interview with Mrs. Murray, Mrs. Bonner went upstairs to take "a look," as she called it, at Lady Ravenhill's fire. She was sitting by it, in the dusk, her head sunk forward on her breast, her hands idly clasped in her lap—together in an attitude of the deepest dejection.

Poor, friendless, young creature! Mrs. Bonner's heart went out to her at once, and she bustled about, stirred up a good blaze, swept the hearth, and, hurrying away down to her own premises, returned with the tea brewed extra strong, accompanied by fresh brown bread, hot from the oven, fresh butter, and thick, yellow cream. If that old Jezebel upstairs was going to stand over him whilst he took his chicken broth, she would stand over her and see that she made a good tea—for a sparrow would have starved on her dinner—tea was despatched in a better fashion, and the things carried away.

Mrs. Bonner still remained hanging about the room, making a feint of dusting where no dust existed, dropping little remarks from time to time—for that lonely figure, sitting evening after evening by the fire, without a soul to speak to, made her heart ache. She would keep her company, just in a kind of way, if she could. Perhaps her intention was more transparent than she suspected, for her young lodger said, after a while,—

"Suppose you sit down, Mrs. Bonner, and talk to me, and tell me all about the history of this great, old house of yours, and keep me company for awhile, if you have nothing to do!"

And Mrs. Bonner, nothing loth, seated herself at a respectful distance without any pressing, and declared that it was but little she knew about the Grange Farm, except that it was main and old, and had been in Bonners' family for many a year. Some did say it had been a great place in its day, and then, beyond the piggeries, there were traces of great terraces and broken steps, and the stables were carved, and made out in rare, fine style, and the big kitchen had been, people said, the

great hall; and once, hundreds of years ago the place was besieged in time of war, and a lot of people shot and piked upon the stairs—Roundheads—and she forgot the name of the others.

"The Cavaliers?" suggested her companion. "This looks like a good old cavalier family mansion, and I am certain that they defended it from collar to roof! Are there any ghosts?"

"Ghosts!—the Lord save us! What put them in your head?"

"Oh, only the fitness of things. There ought to be ghosts in this good old house! It would not be right otherwise! I'm not a bit afraid of them, so you may tell me the worst without hesitation."

"Not afraid of them!—then you're the only person I have heard say the like," said Mrs. Bonner, surveying her with wide-eyed incredulity. "As for me, the very thought of them makes me shake all over like a shape of jelly! I've seen one," she added in a mysterious whisper, not wholly devoid of triumph.

"Seen one!" Oh, Mrs. Bonner, then tell

me at once all about it. What a lucky woman you were!"

"I did not think myself over and above nucky at the time," said Mrs. Bonner, grimly. "I wished myself anywhere else, I can tell you!"

"Now do begin and tell me all about it, for I'm dying to hear a real ghost story from the lips of a person who has actually seen the ghost herself! Come—go on," and thus encouraged, Mrs. Bonner hitched her chair a little nearer, cleared her throat two or three times, and began to relate her crack story—a story which everyone in the village had already heard at least a dozen times:—

"You must know, mum," she said, "that when I was a young girl I was nurse in a grand family in the West of England—the Tregarvens of Tregarven Place—and a mighty old, grand place it was! If you were to see that, you would not think the Grange anyway out of the common. Such big stairs and little rooms and narrow passages, and cellars going underneath to the sea—it beat everything! It was as lonely as lonely could be; standing in a big, rambling park, sloping down to the seashore, with all sorts of bays and creeks running into it. It had a desperate bad name for ghosts, and no servant in that side of the country would stay in it for gold untold, so that is how a stranger like me came to be there. But I got rare, good wages, and I had a stout heart, being as you are now yourself, and Bonner, he was there too, as kind of bailiff, under the head man. His father and mother were living in those days. Well, to make a long story short, as the saying is, Mr. Tregarven was a widower, with one little boy, whom I minded, and two grown-up young ladies, of about eighteen and nineteen. Sweetly pretty they was, as ever you saw, Miss Rose and Miss Mabel; just home from school—finished, as they call it. The master was away at the time I am talking of, and there was only the ladies and little Arthur at the house, and me and the other servant, not so many of them as might have been—not for the want of plenty of wages and advertisements, but a lot had just cleared out in a body, saying they would lose their money and discharge and everything, but they couldn't put up with the White Lady any longer."

"The White Lady! Was that what they called it?" said Eleanor, stirring up the fire into a fine, cheerful blaze.

"Aye, it was. At some times she was worse, and walked more than others. Dark winter and autumn nights she walked constant, and no one dared to go about the house alone; but in the light, bright weather there was never no sign of her to be seen."

"And what was she like when she was seen?"

"She was very tall, nearly six feet high, and wore a large, curled wig, and a lot of hair over her head and down her back; she carried a fan before her face, and all you ever saw of that was a pair of wicked black eyes. She wore a kind of hoop, a white satin dress over a grand flowered petticoat, high-heeled shoes, that went clatter, clatter, up and down the stairs; and in her other hand she carried a pack of cards." Here worthy Mrs. Bonner paused to take breath. "Often and often had she been seen at corners of passages, or met full face on the stairs by the housemaid, going up into the rooms."

"And no one ever caught her?" cried Lady Ravenhill, with arched eyebrows.

"Caught her! Bless you, they couldn't get away from her near fast enough. They ran like Indians in the other direction; and the house had now got such a desperate bad character that Mr. Tregarven was talking quite openly of shutting it up, letting the land, and going to live elsewhere. The young ladies liked the place, and were loth to leave it, and were for staying on at any price; though there was this to be said, they had never seen her, though Miss Mab was always roving about alone, after dark, as bold as any two lions."

"Just at this time, Mrs. Tewson, the house-

keeper, took her niece to mind Master Arthur, and I was promoted to be maid to the young ladies, being smart and handy, and their own having gone off, after a terrible fit of screaming hysterics. She had seen her, and soon I was to do the same. I was standing one evening between light and dark in Miss Mab's room, the door wide open, and she with her back to it before the glass, and was just walking over to shut the door, with a dress hanging over my arm, when I heard a great pitter, pitter, patter coming along the corridor, and in another moment she was standing in the doorway, just as they described. I saw her as plain as I see you now—tall, with the cards, and fan, and black eyes. She stood for a full minute and gazed at me, and then she passed on, and left me feeling as if I would fall in a faint on the floor. Miss Mab turned round sharp, but she saw nothing, but she heard the footsteps as plain as I did, and I just made the spring to the door and barred it, as if she were still outside. I was so frightened I hardly dare creep downstairs, even with Miss Mab walking beside me, and laughing at me as a poor silly goose."

"I did not get over this fright for a good while, but Miss Mab was so brave, and said that she would give anything to see the White Lady that she made me brave too, in a kind of way; and she had her wish, for she and I were going upstairs a few evenings afterwards together, just before dinner—I was carrying up a lot of poor clothing, we had been hard at work in the afternoon—when, lo and behold! at a turn of the landing we came straight face to face with the Lady. There she stood, so close to us I saw her diamonds glitter in the light, and her eyes flash like fire. No wonder people were afraid of her, and said she was the wicked Lady Joan, who spent all her nights at cards, and asked her soul with both and lost. Miss Mab gave a kind of little start, but she neither shrieked nor ran away. She did what we one had ever been known to do before—she faced her, with her head in the air, and said, 'Woman or Demon, let me pass!' She did, indeed, for she figure was standing right in the middle of the stairs, and it moved a bit to one side, and she walked up past it, said I—I dare not but follow her for shame, though the sweat stood out in beads on my forehead, and my knees were knocking together so as I could hardly stagger upstairs, but I did make a bold rush, and got up on the landing, and dashed after my lady into the room. 'Shut the door, Wood—that was my maiden name—she said, 'and come here, I have something to tell you.'

"I need not remark that I slammed the door and looked it pretty smart."

"Listen to me, Emma Wood," she says, nodding her head and speaking under her breath. "That what we met on the stairs just now!"

"Lor', miss, wasn't it terrify!" says I. "I feel like fainting!"

"You feel like nothing of the sort, Wood. It was no more a ghost than you are! It was a human being!"

"Gracious powers, Miss Mab! how can you say so?"

"I saw its eyes; they were living eyes! I heard it breathe. It smelt of onions. Its hands were red, and coarse, and enormous—not like the hands of any lady. Lady Joan in her picture has tiny, wee, white hands, and that woman's on the stairs were like a leg of mutton. I'm the only person who has ever been close to her, I suppose, and not fainted, and it's my opinion that she has her own reasons for haunting the house, and driving us out of it."

"And what reasons could that be?"

"I have an idea, but I won't say at present, my good Emma; but I'm sure we shall see more of the White Woman before long. She'll come back and try and frighten me in earnest."

"And Miss Mab was right. Two nights later—and a pitch dark night it was—she and Miss Rose were sitting up very late play-

ing cards in a queer little three-cornered oak room just out of the big hall. It was late—about eleven—and I was main-dleepy; and as a kind of hint that it were nigh on bedtime, I carried in their candles, and as I did that Miss Rose looked round, and said, 'We'll be ready in a moment, Emma; we've only to finish this round.' They were playing dummy whist, drawn up at a little old card-table by the fire. The words were hardly out of her mouth than there was the White Lady in the middle of us, as if she had burst out of the wall. I turned cold all over when she spoke, in a kind of queer, deep, foreign accent, and said, 'Will you permit me to take a hand?' Miss Rose jumped up as if she had been shot, but Miss Mab was certainly a desperately brave young lady. She made a grab at the figure, but in one moment the candles were blown out, the table upset, and she was gone through the wall just as she had come."

"It took us some time to get over this, I can tell you!—meaning me and Miss Tregarven. Miss Mab, quite cool, lit the candles, picked up the table and cards, and then began going round the room with a light in her hand, examining the wainscot, all oak and in panels, knocking and feeling with her hands."

"I have it!" she called out. "Here is a find! Look here!" and sure enough she held up a tiny bit of white that she found sticking out of a crevice. "There's a piece of her petticoat," she said, quite triumphant like, "and there's the secret door. We must find a way to open it to-morrow. Say nothing about it to anyone; and now come to bed."

Next morning quite early she was down and spent near two hours fidgeting and feeling for the spring, and she found it. It was about eight o'clock, and dusky still, when the bit of wall like slid by, and there was a stone stair leading somewhere. Will you believe it, down went Miss Mab, and after her, as in duty bound, with my heart in my mouth, stealing down till we came to a great, cold vault place, like a chapel, no one knew of, under the house. It was as full of tanks and halos as any custom house, which surprised me a good bit. From that we stole into another place the same, and it was now getting quite light, through long slits of windows, and we crept in among the bales, like two mice, and we saw on this big place a lot of little rooms, and in one we looked in, and there we saw a bed, a chair, a table, a grand-carved glass, and in front of a big curly wig a pot of white paint, a fan, and hanging on the wall the White Lady's petticoat and dress, and mighty grimy they looked in the morning light."

"I then felt no more fear, and nearly as bold as Miss Mab herself. And we stole on still, behind walls, till we were brought up by the sound of voices—loud, coarse, men's voices—and saw a great stream of light and a lot of people close by in another room, where a great fire was roasting up the chimney, and in front of it was a black-looking old woman with a red handkerchief over her head and a pipe in her mouth; another younger, a bold-looking girl, with great, gold earrings, and about four or five men. They had a saucer for a table, and on it were bottles and sausages and bread, and plenty of glasses. The men had tawny faces, some of them, and earrings; and there were one or two men from the village—fishermen supposed to be, but I saw now smugglers—and it was great bravery for smugglers to come into Mr. Tregarven's own house, for he was always on the watch for them and helping the coastguards, he hated 'em so; and people said there was more smuggling and more goods run just somewhere about that part of the coast than in all the rest of England together. There were such fine caves and bays, and the ghostly funerals people said they saw in the park, sometimes six coffins and bearers, were all just so many boxes of lace, and silk, and brandy."

"We cowered down, I can tell you, almost fearing the very beating of our own hearts,

and could hear every word they said. They were glorying in some great run they had made, and laughing and drinking—oh! drinking a deal—women and all.

"There will be a big cargo to-night," says one. "Now's our time, when the old boy's away. The *Jeannette* will be off the point at nine to-night, and she's loaded to the water-mark with the best cognac and cigars; be rare chance we have this time."

"How did your little game do last night?" said one of the sailors to a black-eyed man in his shirt-sleeves turned up, and his bare arms all tattooed.

"Oh, pretty middling, as you call it. Dat young one with the blonde hair, she fear nothing. She face me on the stairs, she face me last night. She is the belle, and the maid was *Pas mal*. I wish we had dem down here now, laughing, and showing a mouthful of white teeth, 'would not I kiss them, *l'anc et l'autre*. I like to see brave girls—brave, and pretty, and young."

"Hold your silly tongue!" said the old woman, shrilly. "You and your nonsense will be getting us all into trouble. You must give that girl a rare good scare, or she'll be smelling a rat!"

"And suppose she *did*, and made out our little game?"

"It would be worse for her if she did," said a big man, fiercely. "I'd get you to decoy her down here, strangle her with these very two hands, and fling her into the old well. We've too much at stake to stand at a trifle. They would say up above that she was lost, and there would be an end of her," he concluded, with an oath.

"At this brutal speech even Miss Mab shivered, and we crept close together—so close that I could hear the thumping of her heart, and every footstep that came near us we thought we were discovered; and when a dog came sniffing I broke out into a cold sweat all over. He found us, too; but, as mercy had it, he was a village dog who knew Miss Mab—a long, ugly, lurching brute—and he only sniffed her, stared at her, wagged his tail, and went away. "I suppose he thought she was a smuggler too. In the end, they all went out, or into their stores. We crept off, and up into the house again, more dead than alive, and covered with cobwebs, and mould, and dust. Miss Mab sent for the coastguard, telegraphed for her papa, and the whole gang were caught that very same night. It was a great triumph for my young lady, and even I got some praise. The goods were sent off, the vaults shut up, the White Lady's clothes exposed to all believers in her, and the house was like any other from that time forward."

"And what became of Miss Mab?" asked Lady Ravenhill.

"Oh! she married an officer—she was just cut out for a soldier herself—and went off to India. And I married, and Mr. Tregarven made me a present of one hundred sovereigns on my wedding-day, and Miss Rosie and Miss Mab gave me my silver teapot and ewer and spoons, the very one you had this evening; and now I've talked you weary and myself hoarse, and I must be going, my lady. I declare there's mine striking!" starting up with horror.

"You deserved all you got, Mrs. Bonner, and I have been greatly interested in your story, and I am very much obliged to you for so kindly entertaining me. You have made the long evening seem nothing," said her lodger.

"I can tell you something else, my lady, if I may make so bold. Your husband's better; he's got his senses quite clear at last, and he's been asking for you. If I were a wife I would see that woman further before I'd let her stand sentry between me and my husband. I'd just open the door as I do this eve, and walk in. Good-night," and so saying Mrs. Bonner suited the action to the word, flung the door wide, walked out and shut it behind her with an unusual amount of decision, leaving Lady Ravenhill to contemplate the propriety of following her advice.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ELEANOR resolved to take Mrs. Bonner's advice the very next day, and now that he had expressed a wish to see her nothing short of main force would keep her out of the sick room.

It was a ludicrous sight, though it had its melancholy phase, that she, the wife, should be kept entirely in the background, and her place usurped in such a manner by a tyrannical old nurse; but then the nurse was strong, capable, and believed most implicitly in her patient. She seemed to have a better right to the post than a delicate-looking girl who believed her husband's life to be stained with the blackest of crimes, and who shrank from his look and touch.

Next morning, after breakfast, and after the self-imposed task of teaching Maggie Bonner, she presented herself, not merely to inquire, for that she had already done, but to gain admittance into the presence of the patient. To her very great surprise she was allowed to enter without parley. The door was opened wide by Mrs. Murray with a fat finger on her lip and a world of caution in her eye.

"Hush!" she said. "You can come in, but make no noise, he's asleep!" And so he was, apparently sound as a child, and Eleanor approached on tip-toe, and took a long look at him.

He was lying on his side with his hand under his head, one arm in splints outside the clothes; and she, prepared as she was for some alteration, was shocked at the awful change in his appearance three short weeks had made. His features were worn and sharpened, his cheeks hollow, his face the colour of death, and his breathing, now she was close to him, seemed strangely laboured and hurried.

"It's the fever—fever from that blow he got on the back of the head," said Mrs. Murray, in an explanatory whisper. "That's what pulled him down; but he's looking better," complacently.

"Looking better! Why he could not possibly look worse," thought Eleanor, as she gazed and gazed down on the wasted features of the sleeper before her; and as she gazed two great big tears came suddenly into her eyes, overflowed, and ran heavily down her cheeks. She had not been prepared to see him thus. He was going to die, she was sure.

"Come—come!" said Mrs. Murray, taking her peremptorily by the arm, "you must not take on here. You'll wake him, and by all accounts you'd not be over sorry if anything did happen. Come here into my own little room and sit down, and compose yourself!"

Her own little bower was a roomy wainscotted dressing-room off the other apartment, where she did a little cooking and kept her medicine bottles, and had her own stretcher pushed in by day.

"It is very wrong of you to say such things to me, Mrs. Murray," said Eleanor, trying to smother her sobs; "not that what you say or think makes any real difference, but it's not true!"

"If I thought you did care for him I'd never say it," said the other, in a loud whisper. "Never! If I've misjudged you I humbly beg your pardon, and be only too glad."

"Why did you not tell me he was so very, very ill," sobbed Eleanor, hopelessly, "instead of saying every day he was better?"

"And he is!" impressively. "I'm not saying he is making a quick recovery—not what he ought to do. He don't seem to care to get well; he leaves all that part of the business to me. He," lowering her voice, and coming closer to her companion—"he has something on his mind. It's partly that that keeps him back, and you know what it is. Don't you?" significantly.

"I think I can form an idea," returned Eleanor, with averted eyes, winking away her tears, and making a struggle for composure.

"And so can I," replied the dame, impressively. "We are both thinking of the same

thing, I'll go bail. It's that business of Rosie Waller's. Isn't that it?"

Eleanor nodded, her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth.

"Was there another sharer in the secret? But then," she reflected, with a sharp pang of agony, that soon the need for all secrecy would be buried in Hugh's grave.

"You knew who she was, of course?" said Mrs. Murray.

"I think so," in a low voice.

"Well, who?" imperiously. "Come now?"

"I would rather not—not say," a flame coming into her pale cheek.

"Not say, what nonsense! Did he never tell you? Why, from your looks I see you don't know. She was his foster-sister; her mother nursed them both, and a fine, strapping young woman she was."

"Foster-sister!" gasped Eleanor, incredulously.

"Aye? What else did you take her for, eh?"

Eleanor here became scarlet and silent, and Mrs. Murray went on,—

"She was married to a gentleman who was out of the country—one of those wild Carews—and Mr. Hugh himself was at the wedding, and stood by her when all the hullabaloo was afterwards. That awful business last winter gave him a terrible turn, for he was main fond of Rosie; and I know for a fact"—Mrs. Murray never said fact—"that he's raising heaven and earth to find out who done it. I believe he will never rest till he knows—he could not die else. All his wandering and ravings were mixed up about Rosie, and money, and you, and the snow—some row you and he had, some words about Rosie, and some about some gentleman that he keeps asking and begging you not to dance with; but, anyhow, no matter what you seem to be at, he's main fond of you," looking keenly at the girl in the window seat.

"As I suppose you know, and it's not much of a return you have made him by all accounts. Here, I'm at it again, and I beg your pardon, my lady. My tongue will wag, and maybe if he is spared to you you will make it up with him yet. There's that saucepan a-biling over, making a plunge at the fire, and seking it, and putting it on the hob. 'Tis best tea, and he will soon be waking. Maybe you'd better not stop to-day, for if he was to see you with them red eyes he might think himself real bad, and that's just the worst thing he could do. You can come in this evening, and have a look at him again."

So thus favoured Eleanor stole on tip-toe out of the two rooms, and made her way downstairs out into the open air, for she felt that she could hardly breathe. This disclosure about Rosie Waller petrified her, and if he was cleared in one case, why should he not be cleared in another. Why not—why not? Supposing he were to die now—and it seemed to her that death was in his face—and he was completely cleared afterwards, how could she bear it, how endure her life?—when he was gone beyond the reach of her prayers for pardon, when the lips that told her that she was laying up a bitter harvest for herself would be closed for ever! And if he was innocent, what a wretch she had been to him! In every way she had gone against his wishes, whenever they clashed with hers. She had ignored him, insulted him, defied him, and now he was dying. Oh, if he died innocent, and she unabsolved, it would break her heart! She declared this to herself over and over again as she paced a narrow walk in the garden between two rows of sprouting gooseberry trees, utterly oblivious that she was without her hat or shawl, and looked, as a farm-labourer expressed it who was digging in a neighbouring plot, right daff and out of her mind. Should she strangle her suspicious—her more than suspicious, and go to him now—this very day, before the going down of the sun, and say to him, with her hand in his,—

"Hugh, forgive me, I believe you are innocent!" But could she—could she say it and let the man she now felt she loved, beyond

everything in the world, pass into the far unknown country with her last words in his ears—an untruth.

Even to ease his mind here, would he not know of her falsehood hereafter? Are not many things clear to the dead that are dim or unknown to the living? She was in a great strait. Torn between doubts and hopes, and love and fear, and still undecided, still fighting a mighty battle with herself, she went once more indoors, donned hat and jacket, and putting, at Mrs. Bonner's earnest entreaties, a lunch of home-made bread in her pocket, since she disclaimed dinner, she set off for a long, long, country ramble all by herself, for she felt that with nothing but the sky above her, the silent fields and hedgerows round her, she was more alone than anywhere else; and ere she returned to that red-roofed Grange she had resolved that she would have made up her mind.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ELEANOR walked away from the village, scarcely knowing which way she took, or which road she followed, so deeply absorbed was she in her own thoughts.

If Hugh was entirely cleared from one suspicion with such ease, why not from another? What motive could he have for putting his foster-sister out of the world? None, that she could possibly imagine! But still, his absence, his wounded arm, the silk handkerchief found in his pocket that fatal night, how—how were they to be explained away?

She stopped in the middle of the road to ask herself this potent question, and, glancing round, found that she was in a part of the wood she had never seen before—on the border of a wide heath or common, and at least three miles from home, or rather Beckford village. The scenery was wild, the silence intense; no human voice broke the stillness, not even the bleating of a sheep, nor the distant rumble of a cart met the ear. The sky had become suddenly clouded over, the wind was rising, and by-and-by large drops of rain began to fall, with heavy, ominous splashes in the dust—drops that portended a storm—not a shower—and presently it burst with extraordinary violence, the wind driving the rain furiously before it across the wide barren plain in sheets of cold wet mist. Our heroine was without cloak or umbrella, and entirely at the mercy of the elements. She looked about her hopelessly—no human habitation was in sight; but, yet, what was that tumble-down looking half-ruined hovel among the firs? A kind of refuge for sheep in bad weather, built of loose stones and thatched with heather. To this shelter (such as it was) she fled at the very top of her speed, and in another minute was standing within it, for there was no door, and apparently no window. She stood in the entrance panting after her late run, and looking out on the most discouraging prospect—a pouring wet afternoon, and a long way from home. She removed her hat, shook the rain off it, and laying it on a stone in the doorway, proceeded to fasten up her hair, which had come adrift. As she stood twisting up her abundant coils into a firm thick knot the sound of heavy breathing in the hut caught her frightened ear, and she was conscious, with a sudden thrill of terror, that she was not alone!

Turning round with the rapidity of the traditional lightning she peered fixedly into the gloom behind her. Her eyes were now more accustomed to the darkness, and she distinctly made out something that looked like a human being on the ground, lying against the far wall. She looked still longer, and she saw that it was a man—a powerful framed gaunt-faced tramp—with a bundle under his head and a pair of wolfish, sunken eyes fixed keenly upon herself. Her first impulse was to turn and flee—aye, even out into the wet, but on second thoughts she made up her mind to do nothing so rash. The girl Mrs. Bonner had been telling her about the previous evening had been as brave as two lions, to quote her late handmaiden. Why should she show the

white feather at the mere sight of a beggar-man? Picking up her hat she backed to the very limits of the hovel, and then said, in a would-be courageous voice,—

"Who is there?"

"A starving man," was the reply, in a hoarse husky accent.

"And how came you here, and starving?" she demanded, plucking up some courage as she spoke.

"I was on the tramp, going to my own town, and I broke down and crawled in here two nights ago, and I'm thinking I'll never leave it now. I'm about done for."

"Has no one been here? Have you had no food?" cried Eleanor, in a horrified voice, advancing a step or two in his direction.

"Who would find me? Where would I get food? I can't move. I had some cold potatoes in my wallet and a bone, but I ate them yesterday morning."

"Poor fellow!" she exclaimed, impulsively; "you must indeed be hungry!" and bethinking herself of the contents of her jacket pocket she drew out her bundle and carried it over to him. Almost before it was well within reach of his hands he had stretched out a long gaunt arm and snatched it roughly from her, and commenced to devour it more like a ravenous animal than a human being, whilst Eleanor stood and surveyed him with frightened, dilated eyes. He was a broad-shouldered, very muscular-looking man, with a bushy red beard, deep-sunken eyes and not ill-shaped features, but he was worn to a skeleton. He was the mere framework of what he once had been—a powerful fellow, and every now and then a hacking, hollow cough seemed to shake the little vitality that remained to him. Still, once these paroxysms were over, he returned to the charge at the breast in his hand, munching and gnawing and tearing with his teeth, though sorely short of breath. His clothes were worn, but not ragged, his boots whole. He looked like a workman out of employ, who had once seen prosperous days.

"That's gone!" he said, abruptly, when he had swallowed the last crumb. "Now for something to drink," turning to her sharply.

"Water? There's plenty in a little stream by the road," said Eleanor. "I saw it as I came up, but how shall I carry it?" looking round the bare hut despairingly.

"Water be blowed!" returned the tramp, savagely; "that's not drink! Have you no flask about you? no little drop of whisky, sherry, or, better than all, brandy?" raising himself as he spoke on his elbow, and looking at her eagerly.

"No, nothing!" she replied, shaking her head emphatically.

With a groan of disappointment her companion again laid himself down on the damp earthen floor, and was seized at once with another frightful fit of coughing—a fit that seemed to shake the hovel itself.

"How am I to get you away from this?" said Eleanor, anxiously, when he had once more got his breath. "I wonder how far we are from the nearest farm or village—do you know?"

"There's a farm about half a mile to the left as you cross the common, or nearer, but village I know none. The last I came from was Maxton, a matter of four mile off."

"Then Beckford is as close, where I am going. You cannot stay here another night!" emphatically.

"Why not?" he demanded, thanklessly; "what's to hinder me? I can die here as well, or better, nor anywhere else!"

"Why should you imagine you are dying?" she said, with assumed cheerfulness. "Once you find yourself in a comfortable house, in a warm, dry bed you will not talk in this way—you will feel much better."

"I'm past all that! I cannot last above a day or so—I know it. Best go your ways and leave me. It's cleared up now, and you can do no good! I didn't want to die of hunger. I'd rather it was the cough took me, and I feel

better since I had a bite o' summat, and I'll try and get to sleep."

"I'll walk on to the farm and find some way of getting you taken into Beckford," said Eleanor, firmly. "I won't be long before I am back," stepping towards the doorway.

"Stop! stop a minute, miss, afore you go!" cried the wretched object she was leaving. "Afore you go," he panted, "and maybe you'll only send, and not come back, tell me who you are? I seem to know your face."

"Why, what does it matter?" she said. "My name is of no consequence. I am going to befriend you, and I will come back. Don't be disheartened about yourself, my good man."

"Good man! How do you know I'm that?" he interrupted, fiercely. "I'm not a good man—and do you know what I'm a dying of? Drink for one thing, though you mightn't think it—drink, and—a secret. 'Twas the secret made me take to drink, and the drink has eaten up all my money and my wife, and now it's killing me—so the doctors told me months ago—and I only laughed in their faces and said so much the better! I'm not for living, and it's main kind of you, miss, to try and keep the breath in me, but it's no sort of use—I'm going at last."

And here, exhausted by his long speech, he leant back against his wallet, and gasped convulsively for breath.

"A secret! Could it be anything like hers?" she wondered, as she came over, knelt beside him, and wiped the dew from his forehead with her handkerchief.

"Tell me your name," he said, slowly opening his eyes. "You may as well humour my fancy. Your face—yes—it's like a face I knew—but whose?"

"My name," she said, "since you wish so much to know it, is Ravenhill."

"Ravenhill!" he echoed, starting to a sitting posture. "Miss, Mrs., or what—not his wife?"

"I am Lady Ravenhill," she returned, shrinking away a little. "You—you—seem to know the name!"

"Know the name! Wasn't I born on the Blackmore estates, and my grandfather before me? And you are Miss Eleanor—that was blind. Aye, I remember when you had your sight too! 'Tis strange you should come upon me, but it would be stranger still if he did."

"Why?" cried Eleanor, breathlessly. "Tell me why. Has it anything to say to your secret? Oh! tell me!" imploringly.

"Aye—now I'm dying I wouldn't mind his knowing, for though I have a sore grudge against him, he were always main good to her."

"You mean Rosie Waller," said Eleanor, with eagerness.

"Who else? I believe he has been turning the world upside down to find out who did it—the murder."

"He has! he has!" cried his wife, throwing herself on her knees beside the tramp in a frenzy of impatience.

"He has! So I've been told, and"—now bringing out each word with impressive distinctness—"I know."

"Oh, then, if you know, for mercy sake, tell me!" pleaded Eleanor, wringing her hands. "Tell me, and clear him!" she cried, in passionate excitement.

"Clear him! Why, who wants to clear him? Nobody ever thought as he had done it, did they? Why, I feel you shaking all over like a flower in the wind. I'm blowed if I don't believe as you did! This beats all!"

Here another fit of coughing interrupted him for five minutes.

"But since you know who it really was, you will tell me, won't you?—not to repeat, except to him!" she urged, frantically.

"No—no—no—I'll tell himself, maybe—no one else. Let him come and see me—that will be the plan."

"He can't—he is very ill—perhaps dying!" she cried, with tears in her eyes. "He was in an awful railway accident a month ago—and

I fear—I fear that he will be a long time before he leaves his bed. He looks worse than you do," and here she covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears, the tramp meanwhile surveying her with wide-eyed astonishment. This young lady, kneeling beside him on the hovel floor, in floods of tears, was a curious sight. Was she crying for—her husband, or for what?

"Here, I can't talk no more—nor you. Come and see me to-morrow, if I'm here," he said at last, and Eleanor rose, dried her eyes, after imploring him in vain to give her *one* hint—half a hint—to the clue.

He took no notice of her entreaties, merely shaking his head doggedly, and once breaking into a harsh, odd, wild laugh when she assured him "that she did not want to bring the culprit to justice—only to clear another."

All her entreaties were useless, and as the evening was coming on she felt that no time was to be lost in removing the owner of this priceless (to her) secret to a safer place. Another night in that damp hut would surely kill him, and he and his possession would pass away altogether.

This thought shod her feet with extraordinary speed, as she sped across the moor in the direction of the farm, whose gables she saw on the verge of its borders.

She arrived breathless, and was taken for a fugitive flying for dear life, but in a few hurried sentences she told her tale; and soon after a kind of stretcher, carried by two stout labourers, was sent out in search of the hovel, Eleanor and the farmer, mounted in a high tax-cart, following with brandy, blankets, and other restoratives.

Thanks to their prompt arrival the patient was removed before nightfall to a clean, warm, comfortable quarter in the village of Beckford, was seen by the local doctor without delay, who, after the first glance, endorsed the patient's own opinion, that "he had not many hours to live."

(To be continued.)

CLOCKS, ANCIENT AND MODERN.—Clocks were first made by the Arabs, and the ancient cities of Bagdad and Cordova were at one time famous for their wonderful time-keeping machines. The Caucasian race, which has since spread its learning and civilization over so vast an area, first looked upon the clock as a joint product of an Arab and Satan, and, in fact, it so regarded every invention and all scientific attainments of the then progressive Arabs. This, and the further fact that clocks were at first very costly, prevented an early and widespread introduction of them into Europe. The monasteries first used them to direct the monks in prayer, and afterwards they were put on tall steeples and towers in larger towns to accommodate the public. When first put up in Europe clocks were regarded with a superstitious fear, and as the most wonderful of inventions. The first public clock put up of which we have any record was at Padua, Italy. Bologna possessed a famous striking clock as early as 1356, but the large towns in Germany and France did not begin to put up tower or steeple clocks until about 1400. Paris, however, had a clock as early as 1364. Kensington Museum, London, boasts a clock that was made by a monk for Glastonbury Abbey in 1325. There have been many wonderful and ingenious improvements added to the modern clock; and the tower or steeple timekeeper of to-day is much handsomer and stronger than the ancient public clock. In Trinity Church steeple, New York, there is a clock, the winding-crank of which has to be turned eight hundred and fifty times in winding up. There are several other very strong clocks in the United States; and in Europe, at Strasburg, Heidelberg and elsewhere, there are some very ingenious and complicated time-keeping machines.

GOLDEN GRAIN.

CHAPTER XXV.

A FRIENDLY GIFT.

BITTER indeed, and terribly self-reproachful, were the self-communings that were my portion after I had shut myself into my own pretty room, after my miserable interview with Reuben Fairchild in the Oriel room, and wept out the *souppçon* of temper that had helped to cause my agitation. Who and what was this man that he should dare to accuse me, Magdalen Ormsby, of giving my love to any man unsought; how had he mingled himself so strangely with my destiny—how could he read my heart, and see there what I had hardly dared to own to myself—the great love I felt for Hugh Meredyth!

And yet how true it was. Under all the wide Heaven there was nothing to me like the love of this man. I would have given half my existence, nay—all the rest of it—to know that I should be his loved and loving wife for a month. I knew it now. I had never realised it, perhaps, in all its full intensity, till this dark-browed man had put it into rough words, and showed me where my heart was wandering.

I knew that I loved him. From that day at Wassenhauser when my triumph seemed so much sweeter because of his kindly eyes and gentle voice, I had loved him. But I thought myself brave and secret enough to have kept what I felt from all the world. Why, everyone must see it, if this man, whom I hardly knew, could look into my face, and tell me of it in coarse, plain terms. What would they all think of me? They must all see it, and know it, and how wickedly ungrateful I must seem in their eyes to try and win the love of the man who was to be the husband of my loving, trusting pupil!

I was quite unheeding, or I should never have reasoned with myself so foolishly. I believe I had almost made up my mind to run away from Priory Park in my disquiet and sorrow, and get out of Mr. Fairchild's and Hugh Meredyth's way altogether, when a rap came at my door, and Lady Hilda asked if she might come in.

I hastily brushed away all traces of tears as far as I could, and answered her.

"Let me in, there's a dear," she said, "I have something for you."

I opened the door, and she stood there with a dainty bird-cage in her hand, containing a golden canary that fluttered its little wings, and began to chirp as soon as she put it in the bow-window of my little sitting-room.

"He is for you?" she said, laughing at my look of surprise. "Guess who sent it?"

"I guess you bought it yourself," I replied; but she shook her head.

"No," she said, "try again."

"Lord Henry, perhaps?"

"No, it wasn't Harry; all he said was 'By Jove, he wished he'd thought of it.' He knew you were fond of birds."

"So I am of every live thing except monkeys; they are too much of a caricature of humanity to be pleasant. I don't know of anyone else who was likely to know my penchant for pets unless it was your mamma, my dear, or the earl."

"Neither of them, neither of them!" replied the beautiful girl, as she fairly danced round me with glee, "what do you think of cousin Hugh?"

"Mr. Meredyth!"

"Just him, and no one else. He had to send a lot of birds for mamma—for the aviary, you know—no, you don't know, it was before you came; but there's one being made just outside mamma's room on the west lawn, and the birds have come, and a note from cousin Hugh. There are two beauties for my boudoir, warranted only to sing when I want them to, he says, and to begin the very moment I feel inclined for vocal music, and there's a note

telling me all about them, and at the end he says, 'The brown cage is for Miss Ormsby, if she will do me the favour to accept of it. Give it to her, little one, with my very best wishes, I know I heard sometime and somewhere that she is fond of pets; he is a good bird, and I can testify to his singing powers.'"

It was a little gift, and one which I could accept and have no feeling of embarrassment, and yet I could hardly take it from Hilda's hand without betraying what the accepting of it was to me. There was not a word in the note that Hilda produced and showed me that any gentleman might not have written to or about any lady. And yet my heart throbbed and my eyes filled with tears as I read it, and thought of it, and bent over the pretty little cage with its crested occupant—a charming fellow, with a voice of more sweetness than power, that soon came to be my greatest charm, and a potent exorciser of all rebellious and evil thoughts. Not even Hilda ever guessed how many hours I spent in silent communings with that tiny bird—how I hung over it and caressed it till the little creature came to know my voice, and to look for my footsteps, and to chirp out a welcome to me whenever I came into the room.

I think something of my gladness was visible in my face when Hilda gave him to me, and I struggled hard, too, to keep anything like consciousness out of my looks in talking to her. I suppose I was unnerved by what had just happened. Indeed, I felt my eyes brimming over after a minute or so, and my pupil exclaimed—

"Why, Magdalen, dear, you are crying!"

We had abandoned the formal "Miss Ormsby" from almost the first day. She had begged me to dispense with the ever recurring "lady;" she declared it was enough to have the servants say it at every second word. She was sure she should learn of me a great deal faster if we might be "Hilda" and "Magdalen" to each other. Hers was such a sweet nature that familiarity would never breed contempt in our case; and I was only too glad to drop the Miss Ormsby, which was somehow always connected with Mrs. Wortley Craddock and her unpleasant household in my mind.

It was odd how far away those days seemed to me now. Priory Park seemed to have put a lifetime between me and my struggling experiences, though even in this Eden I had found a serpent. There was a thorn among the roses even of this beautiful retreat, and Reuben Fairchild's dark face was threatening to stand between me and the happiness of the new life I had just begun.

"Crying," I said, turning abruptly away, so that Hilda should not see my face, which indeed was wet with tears of mingled joy and pain—joy that Hugh Meredyth should even think of me, and pain at the memory of the bitter words which were still ringing in my ears—"nonsense dear, I—"

But my voice broke in the words I would have spoken, and turned them into a sob. "Tears come very readily sometimes," I said, making an effort to recover myself, and succeeding better than I expected. "If you had been as unused to kindness as I have, you would understand how every little thing goes straight to the heart now and then. It was very kind of your cousin to think of me."

"Hugh is always kind," said Hilda, looking at me curiously; "but you were not crying over his canary, Magdalen, dear; you have been crying ever so long; has anything happened?"

"No, dear—nothing—that is—"

"That is, something has. Tell me this minute, unless—ah! perhaps I have no business to ask. Perhaps it is something with which we have nothing to do. Forgive me if it is; I did not mean to be rude—only to comfort you if I could."

"You are a darling little consoler," I said, returning the loving kiss she pressed upon my cheek; "I have nothing to cry about here. If ever a forlorn girl found a happy home I have

found one with you. I was nervous and upset."

"I had not meant to use the word, but she caught at it at once."

"Upset, dear! What has happened to upset you?"

"Nothing much. Mr. Fairchild—"

"Nasty man! Do you know, Magdalen, I am beginning to hate him? I hope it isn't wicked, but he has grown so much more disagreeable lately. He was ever so much better when I was a little girl, and he was Harry's tutor, and nothing else. It seems to me that he has changed ever since we were all in Germany together, when we saw you at that school. Mamma says he has been a different man from that time."

"What happened to alter him, then?" I asked.

"I was very curious about everything connected with Mr. Fairchild. I believed him to be, if not mad, a monomaniac; and I longed to hear anything that would throw a light on him and his history."

"Nothing, that I know of," Hilda said. "He seemed to change and get disagreeable from that time. He is always talking in riddles—hinting at things he could do if he would. I don't know whether he talks to papa and mamma like that. I fancy not, for they tell me I am foolish and misunderstand him whenever I tell them what he says to me. But I am afraid of him, and it isn't fair of him to frighten you, too."

"He does frighten me," I said. "Certainly I was where I had no business to be when I saw him just now, so I deserve it."

"Where you had no business to be!" Hilda said, in a tone of surprise. "Then it was nowhere in this house. You have business to go wherever you like in the Priory. Tell him that when he is rude to you again."

"I had no business there! I was in the Oriel room. I see you wonder what took me there. It was that portrait."

"That Hugh says is to like you."

"Like me!"

"That's what Hugh said. He said take away the evil look that that picture has somehow, it was your very self."

"Mr. Meredith flatters me, or else my eyes have deceived me. That portrait is very beautiful."

"And what does your glass tell you?" asked Hilda, laughing, and forcing me to turn my head and look at myself in the glass over the mantelpiece. "There's a picture every bit as beautiful as any picture in the house. So you went to look at that wicked woman's likeness! Oh! I have heard all about her, and she was wicked; and Mr. Fairchild caught you there, did he? I believe he goes into that room more than any one else in the house. And what did he say to you?"

"Several very disagreeable things. He managed to remind me, as he has done before, of my position here; and he told me a piece of news *appropos* of nothing that I could see."

"What was it? I like news."

"Something about you, my dear," and I smiled at the bright, pretty girl without a quiver on my lips, though my heart was aching with the pang the very remembrance of Reuben Fairchild's spiteful words gave it.

"He has no business to talk of me."

"I do not think he has, but he did. He was speaking of Mr. Meredith and—"

"Of course Hugh, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"What had he to say about Hugh? He doesn't like him, I know. I believe it is because Hugh is good and he is not."

"He only told me that some day or other Mr. Meredith is to be more than cousin to you, pretty one," I said, "and that—"

"How dare he?" Hilda said, her face flushing with indignation. "How dare he talk of things he knows nothing about?"

"Especially as if it were an arrangement that was public property, or I should not have spoken after him," I said; "as if the matter were

all settled and arranged between you, or rather amongst you all, and as if everybody knew it!"

"Did he? Then he'll find himself mistaken some time, when Hugh marries the woman he loves, and I—well, when the wandering prince comes that I am going to wait for. Nothing under a prince will ever tempt me to go away from papa and mamma, and you may tell him so when he ventures on the subject again."

"I don't think he will do that. But, dear, he seemed to speak as if it was a family matter that had been arranged ever so long ago, and that your father and mother had settled it all for both of you. Is it not so in reality?"

"No. I know it has been talked about," Hilda said, blushing prettily and looking at me with rather troubled eyes; "and I know, too, that papa and mamma would like it. You see I am talking to you as if you were my sister, but Hugh and I don't like it at all. We have come to that understanding. We adore each other at present, but we have both agreed that we should hate each other very much if we were obliged to marry. And if my venerable parents continue to plot to bring us together, we shall counterplot to keep apart. That's the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as people have to say in courts of justice. No matter what Mr. Reuben Fairchild may say, he had better leave cousin Hugh alone in his tales. If he provoked him there would be mischief—he isn't a very patient man."

"Mr. Meredith must never know I gossiped about him," I said, half frightened lest Hilda's open nature might lead to a betrayal of what I had told her. But she kissed me, and said she should never tell Hugh if I didn't, and left me alone to finish out my cry in a whirl of passionate joy over the unconscious bird that I should love better than ever now that I knew Reuben Fairchild had spoken falsely when he told me that Hugh Meredith was engaged to his cousin.

CHAPTER XXVI.

I AM PUZZLED.

THE memory of Reuben Fairchild's uncomfortable words, and Hilda's indignant denial of what he asserted, and the dream of joy that I allowed myself, put out of my head the queer thoughts I had had about the portrait and the ring. Now that I found that the former tutor of Harry Meredith haunted the passages and rooms of the west-wing, and was fond of the Lanthorn Turret as a place of leisurely resort, I resolved to trouble that part of the house no more with my presence.

It was not much to deprive myself of the delight of wandering sometimes along the echoing old passages that the earl and his family hardly ever trod, and the pleasure of enjoying the view from the turret, which was one of the prettiest in all Surrey. If any act of mine could keep me and Reuben Fairchild apart I resolved that it should not be wanting. I was very angry with myself for the wild joy that filled my heart at Lady Hilda's announcement regarding herself and her cousin. His being free, as far as she was concerned, brought him no nearer to me; and I strove with all my might to put him out of my head. He had gone to his regiment again—Captain Meredith now; he had only been lieutenant in the old Wassenhauer days, when I had seen him for the first time, and laid my heart at his feet unasked and unsuspected—and he was not expected at Priory Park again for some time.

To my great delight Harry announced one morning at breakfast that Mr. Fairchild was going away for a while. He had declared himself to be wanting a change, and had arranged all business so that he could get away comfortably.

"I never saw such a methodical party in my life!" Harry said—he was anything but methodical himself, dear boy. "He has been

docketing his papers and arranging his desks and shelves as if he were going to die, and wished to give his heirs and successors as little trouble as possible!"

"Mr. Fairchild is a capital man of business," Lady St. Colomb said. "It would be as well if you would take a lesson from him in these matters, Harry; it would do you good."

"Yes, I suppose it would," Harry replied. "But I got along somehow, mamma. You'll see, when I get to Oxford, I shall be a pattern of neatness and order. When you and Hilda here come to pay me a visit, you will say you never saw such spick-and-span tidiness. You don't know, Miss Ormsby, what a neat person I am!"

"I can guess," I replied, laughing, and Lady St. Colomb declared that Harry's tidiness was all "the outside of the cup and the platter"; that he never minded where a muddle was, so it was out of sight; and if anyone opened his boxes or drawers a hopeless confusion would be found, showing that he had no real sense of neatness.

"That's just what it's very rude of anyone to do!" Harry retorted. "If I like to keep my belongings in a state of elegant confusion—as I once heard a lady call a hopeless muddle in a room into which she once went, belonging to royalty—it is my affair and no one else's. You just put me in order before I go, mamma, and I'll keep house for myself splendidly!"

Harry was going to Oxford, now that he was emancipated from Mr. Fairchild's guidance; and but for some delay which was unavoidable, he would have been there sometime already, and I might have been still struggling with Mrs. Wortley Craddock's disagreeable children over their hated lessons, or, worse still, striving for something to do myself and finding nothing, as had been my unlucky plight before. Surely there was something more than mere chance in the fate that brought us together once more, and led me to Priory Park! Something of the Providence that aspers our ends had sent the bright lad to interrupt the music-lesson on that dreary winter day, when my world seemed to have narrowed itself down to Mrs. Craddock's school-room, and Mrs. Mander's little back attic.

It was wonderful what a sense of relief there seemed to be on all of us after Mr. Fairchild had left. He was only going for a time; but with the exception of the earl, whose right hand he certainly was in all business matters, the whole house appeared brighter and freer for his absence. It might be that I measured everyone by myself; but I think I felt as Sinbad must have done when the old man of the sea dropped off his back and left him in peace.

Lady St. Colomb asked him where he was going; not with any special curiosity, I think, but as a fashion of showing an interest which I do not believe she really felt. His reply seemed to be addressed to me; and it was odd, to say the least of it. He was going to a good many places, he said; perhaps he might get as far north as Aberdeen; and he should run across to Germany, and then he should come back by way of Jersey. I had friends in Jersey, he had heard; could he do anything for me?

Aberdeen, Germany, Jersey! It was odd he should select the places, of all others, where my life had been spent. How foolish and nervous I was getting, to be sure; and how ridiculous to associate his journeyings with myself; and yet I was sure, he was watching my face closely as he spoke. I merely said that I had no friends in Jersey except Dr. Leverage. If he was anywhere in the neighbourhood of Navarre House, I should be glad of any news of him and his. I tried with all my might to avoid him, but he managed to get a moment's leave-taking with me and pressed my hand as if I had responded as he wished to his absurd proposal in the Oriel room, instead of treating it with the contempt it deserved.

"I can wait," he said, in a low humming tone that frightened me inexpressibly; there seemed so much of madness in it. "And everything comes to the man who waits, you

know! I warn you, Magdalen—my Magdalen as you shall be some time—you have the fate of this haughty household in your hands. I can make them bite the dust; and through you, my darling—through you!”

I was sure he was mad now. Had he not told me an untruth in the matter of Hilda and Hugh Meredyth, and were not his words as wild as any ever uttered by the wildest lunatic? He was going away, but when he came back if he said any more such ridiculous things to me I would assuredly tell the earl. He was not so wrapped up in his son's former tutor that he would not listen to reason about him. And in the meantime we should be at peace, and able to enjoy the remainder of Harry's stay at home, and the bright summer weather as we liked.

After the long vacation Harry was to go up; and his mother looked upon him as lost to her for ever, and lamented the coming separation with all her warm heart, as did Hilda too.

“It is the first going from me,” she said, tearfully, when I remarked that, after all, Oxford was not so very far. “I shall see him often enough, I know. He can come home, and we can go there; and we shall. It isn't that, Magdalen, it is the break. Our boys never are our boys again when once they go away from us. He will be a young gentleman, full of the proprieties when I see him next, and ashamed to kiss his mother maybe—who knows?”

Whereupon Harry hugged her till she was out of breath, and declared if she came to Oxford he would kiss her in the middle of the High-street at its most crowded hour; or in the Broad on Sunday when she came down to next year's commemoration. And I believe he would have kept his word; college did not spoil him in that respect, or lessen by a hair's breadth his chivalrous devotion to his mother.

Lady St. Colomb surprised me in tears after Reuben Fairchild had left; I was unnerved, as I had been after the interview in the Oriel room, and angry with myself too, for the influence he seemed to have over me. It was as if I were under some spell, and after a little persuasion she got the whole of the story out of me. I told her how Mr. Fairchild had asked me to be his wife, and in what a threatening fashion; and I fancy she was just a little surprised that I should have taken his offer in such a manner. I was only a governess—a young person who had her own living to get—and he was a man with money, and well able to keep a wife.

She did not say anything, but I guessed from her look that she did not think there was anything surprising in the offer. But she shook her head when I told her of the threatening words regarding the earl and his family with which it had been made.

“My dear,” she said, “I have heard something of this before. More than once he had said curious things to Hilda herself, and I really think his brain must be a little turned. He has had a great deal of trouble in his life, but he has been most useful to Lord St. Colomb, and was a faithful, careful guardian and tutor to our wild Harry, so that we value him highly, though we think him odd. I should not like him to annoy you, and if the earl—”

“Oh, pray do not tell his lordship,” I said. “I dare say I have been magnifying the matter; it does not seem so bad since I have spoken of it.”

“Troubles told are half cured, my dear,” her ladyship said. “I am glad you have confidence enough in me to tell me your troubles; we will try and put a stop to Mr. Fairchild's love-making if there is any more of it. As for his threats about my husband or anyone else, there's nothing in them, be sure of that. No one can do any harm to Lord St. Colomb; he never harmed mortal creature, I am sure, in all his life. Did Mr. Fairchild favour you with anything else?”

She had not heard the words nor seen the look that accompanied them, or she would not have thought so lightly of them, I am sure. Whether Reuben Fairchild could do

anything or not, he meant mischief, I was certain of that much.

“He told me a piece of news,” I said, “about Lady Hilda.”

“Indeed, what of her?”

“That she was to marry her cousin.”

“What, Hugh?” and Lady St. Colomb sighed. “He had no business to say such a thing; there is nothing settled, though, of course, if such an arrangement came about, we should be very well pleased. I have no doubt the earl has spoken of it in his presence, or maybe to him; he looks upon him as a younger brother, or another son almost, and thinks he has our welfare at heart thoroughly. No one knows better how dear Hilda is to us, and how earnestly we should like to see her Hugh's wife. There isn't a better man in the three kingdoms than Hugh Meredyth.”

How my heart glowed and throbbed to hear her speak thus. Better! no, nor any one half so good! I fancied that she must have seen the colour flash into my face at the very mention of his name. I felt so guilty in my own foolish heart that I thought every one must detect me. But there was not the slightest suspicion in the kindly eyes that looked straight into mine as she spoke to me.

“And does Lady Hilda—is it to be?” I asked bunglingly enough. I wanted confirmation of what my pupil had told me about herself and her cousin.

“No, I don't believe she does,” Lady St. Colomb said, with a smile and a sigh together. “She likes Hugh; indeed, she loves him and she does not scruple to say so, but it is as she loves Harry or her father, no other way, and he looks upon her as a little sister—something to love and pet, and take care of, but not to marry. You see there is no need on either side for any consideration about fortune; at least it need not be the first consideration, as it too often is. Hilda will be tolerably well off; and as for Hugh, he could afford to take a wife from the workhouse with no outfit but the parish suit she has on, if he so willed. He has plenty, and he is not a spendthrift, and he will inherit more from his uncle—his mother's sister; and, failing our Harry, he will be Earl of St. Colomb.”

“He will never be that, I hope,” I said; “there is no fear of such a contingency.”

“No! and yet how accidents give peerages to all sorts of people,” her ladyship said.

“Hugh would make a better peer of the realm than my madcap laddie. And he would be a better husband for my Hilda than any one I know of, but I am afraid she will not choose him; we are not going to force her inclination. And as for Hugh, I fancy he has found his fate.”

“Where?”

For the life of me I could not help the question, nor the startled tone in which I put it. And Lady St. Colomb laughed as she answered.

“I don't know, but I think she is in existence somewhere. I have not told anyone, so you must not let out that I have hinted it to you.”

“I will keep silence, I said. “No one is likely to ask me anything about Mr. Meredyth.”

“Except Hilda, and she might tease him. I caught my nephew rhapsodizing one day, over—what do you think?”

“I haven't the least idea,” I replied, trying to speak calmly, and not betray the heart-sickness that was creeping over me. If he had lost his heart, as she insinuated, what was to become of mine? Bah! I was the most consummate fool in the world. I would get her to tell me all she knew; and she loved to talk, dear lady, and I knew that I should hear all there was to tell. I would have it confirmed that Hugh Meredyth was not heart free, and then I would put it out of my mind altogether, and bury the secret of my unasked love fathoms deep, and never, never bring it up again to the light of day, even for a moment.

Lady St. Colomb liked to talk, and she had come to have confidence enough in me to make me the repository of her household and other little troubles, so that I was not a bit surprised

at her gossiping mood, and I waited with no small impatience for her story of Hugh Meredyth's hidden love.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BY THE WHITE LADY'S POOL.

“If Hilda suspected it she would tease him out of all patience,” her ladyship said; “and sometimes I wonder whether my eyes deceived me, for Hugh has always been so very matter-of-fact. No such thing as a woman seemed to have entered his head till lately. I think it dates from the time when we were all in Germany, when Harry fished you out of the Rhine, as he declares he did, at St. Goar.”

“It was very nearly that,” I said, laughing. “I should have been in the river very soon if some one had not come to the rescue.”

“Well Hugh was with us that time, you know,” Lady St. Colomb went on; “I never saw anyone that he seemed the least little bit interested in. He was always civil to young ladies, nothing more; but as soon as we came to England there seemed a change in him. He was absent and far away in his thoughts. I had not been his pet auntie nearly all his life not to know when there was anything amiss with him; and one day, it was just after the Earl and I had been talking about Hilda, and letting him see, I fancy, what we wished, that I came to know that it would never be—at least, unless something came about to alter what was in his mind. He was in London at the time in a set of chambers in the Albany, belonging to a friend of his who was abroad, and I surprised him one day. He had not heard the bell, I suppose, or given orders that he was not at home or something. Anyway, I was let in, and he had all the things in his private desk strewn about on the table, and he was going on over something he had in his hand like a lover on the stage.”

I laughed in spite of myself, in spite of the leaden weight that had come upon my heart at her words, at the notion of Hugh Meredyth going on like a stage lover, and she nodded at me, laughing herself.

“He was indeed, my dear,” she said, “kissing it, whatever it was, and talking to it as if it could understand and know what he meant. I just caught sight of it before he whisked it away out of my sight. I didn't pretend to have seen it, and he tried his utmost to seem at ease and tell me he had been burning letters and so forth. But it was no use; we both felt uncomfortable, and I came away soon, and left him to gather up his scattered belongings, and forget that I had interrupted him. I did not want to pry into his secrets, and I was very angry with his man for letting me go in.”

“I don't suppose Mr. Meredyth was angry for long,” I remarked, really for want of anything to say. I wanted so to know what the love-token was; and yet to be told there was one at all was only so much more confirmation of my own opinion of myself, viz., that I, Magdalen Ormsby, was the greatest idiot that ever breathed. I thought she must be mistaken; I could not imagine Hugh going on as she said, but she evidently believed in it herself.

“It was just a bow of blue ribbon,” she said; “and it had something white about it that looked for all the world like a bunch of everlasting flowers, only no one ever wears everlastings. I suppose they were faded and had been fresh sometime. He was just kissing that bit of senseless ribbon and talking to himself something about would the day ever come when he should see the owner of the ribbon, I suppose, again. At any rate, he said ‘her,’ and mumbled over the thing again and put his cheek against it, till I began to wonder if he was in his right senses.”

“They say no one in love is in his right senses,” I said, and my words came with a gasp—a literal stopping for breath caused by what her ladyship had said.

Was I going mad, as I had thought Reuben Fairchild to be? I must be; and yet—a blue ribbon, and with white everlasting flowers!

Where was the blue bow I had lost at Wassenhauser on the day of my triumph there? When I was changing my dress at night after the excitement was all over, I missed one of the small bows with which it had been adorned, and I sought it everywhere, for in the centre of it I had pinned a tiny tuft of the edelweiss, the snow flower of the Alps, that had been given to me by my darling Dorothy Sondes. She had been in Switzerland one vacation with her parents, and had seen and enjoyed all the beauties of that wonderful land, and she had brought back some edelweiss from a spot where a sad accident had robbed one of the alpine villages of nearly all of their best and bravest men.

There had been sports going on, and the village was *en fête*, and an avalanche had come down and buried the merry-makers, leaving only the old people and little children, and those who could not leave their homes. Nearly all the houses had escaped, the snow coming down on the little plain where the amusements were being carried on; and when Dorothy saw the spot it looked like part of the side of the mountain, and above it, on the place from which the terrific slip of frozen snow came down, the little flower grew and reared its tiny head amidst the eternal snows.

There is a pretty superstition about it—that it brings luck under certain conditions to whoever wears it—and Dorothy insisted that it would bring me luck if I wore it with my new dress on that memorable examination day, and I fastened one or two of the velvety blossoms into that bow on my dress, and surely the luck came.

Did not that examination bring me the medal and wreath, the coveted first-prize, and more than that, all the friendship and protection of my kind friends at Priory Park—something had brought me luck; but I had finished the day by discovering that I had lost my edelweiss.

Was that where it had gone to? Into Hugh Meredyth's keeping—and was he treasuring it even now and thinking? Bah! what a fool I was. Was my bit of ribbon the only blue bow in the world?

Thousands of other women might have worn such an ornament. Doubtless it was a token of some London conquest of his, and the next thing we should hear about Hugh Meredyth would be that he was going to be married.

I hardly know what Lady St. Colomb said to me after that. She talked on, but my head was in a whirl, and I was thankful when Lady Hilda came in to say that she was wanted, and went with her, so that I could escape to my own room, where my bird was singing—the bird that he had sent me—and turn out my old Wassenhauser dress and look at it and think—think, like a demented creature, that Hugh Meredyth loved me, instead of putting the notion far away from me, and believing, as I ought to have done, that he was as far away from me as the poles from one another.

I took out the dress—I had it still. I kept it as a memento of those days and Madame Lowenthal's kindness, and shook it out, and looked at the vacant place from which the bow had fallen, and behaved like an idiot as I was, till Lady Hilda came up and put a stop to my vagaries.

My edelweiss! It was pleasant to think of it in Hugh's keeping, and I had fancied it trodden under everybody's feet or picked up by one of the many servants who were about the school that day, and who would care nothing for it, but throw it away as worthless because it had no bright colours or easily seen beauty.

"Come out for a walk," Hilda pleaded. "We shall have the Park to ourselves. No fear of meeting that odious Mr. Fairchild now—it is like waking up from a nightmare to know he is gone—he has been horrid lately."

"It is pleasant without him, certainly," I said, trying to still myself into something like sense and propriety of demeanour. "Where shall we go, dear?"

"Let us go down to the river, Harry is there fishing; there is a wonderful shoal of some fish or other passing by just now. He told me all about it, and how they come at uncertain periods; but I don't understand quite. Anyway, he's there, and we can go and look at him. He is enjoying himself I should think—up to his knees in the water, like a masculine Patience in waterproof boots."

I was glad to go. Perhaps the fresh air and the bright sunshine would quiet my turbulent nerves a little. I felt inclined to cry and laugh and do all sorts of absurd things, and yet I must hide all outward semblances of agitation and carry myself as became the companion and instructress of the Lady Hilda Meredyth.

We met the earl just as we got out, and he stopped us for a word. He never let his daughter go by him without a smile or a caress.

"You are making a woman of her already, Miss Ormsby," he said. "She looks ever so much better since she had you for a companion. It was not good for her to be without a young lady about her."

"You flatter me, my lord," I said. "But I am gratefully glad to be of use."

"And we are gratefully glad to have you," he said, echoing my words, and then, with a sudden squeeze of my hand, which he had taken, and a visible paling of his usually ruddy face, he said: "Child, where did you get those eyes?"

"I don't know," I said, half frightened at his vehemence. "From my father I expect. They are not like my mother's."

"Your father? He is dead."

"Oh, yes."

"And you remember him?"

"No."

"Forgive me. I have no right to question you, but in that one moment I seemed to see—ah, well, a face and form of long ago—as someone has it. The resemblance has vanished now. Don't get into mischief down at the river. Don't let Harry persuade you into that precious new-fangled boat of his, or you'll get a wetting, if nothing worse comes of it."

"The dear old pater is something brusque," Magdalen, Hilda said. "I wonder who he thinks you are like. Everybody seems to have a fancy about your face. Hugh says you are like that picture; mamma says you remind her of someone just as papa said just now, and Mr. Fairchild said—"

"What did he deign to say? Am I like anyone in that gentleman's estimation?"

"Oh, yes. You are like the family, the Meredyths, he means. He said, in his disagreeable fashion, the day after you came here, that if he had not known you were Miss Ormsby the governess he should have taken you for one of the family."

"I am sure I ought to be flattered. And who does your brother think I am like?"

"Harry? Oh, he said in his usual blunt fashion it was all bosh. That everybody was like everybody else if it came to that, and you were just like yourself and no one else. A jolly nice girl, that he wouldn't have altered for a trifle."

"I am very much obliged to him. I like his verdict better than anyone else's. Woe is that by the pool?"

We were close to the White Lady's Pool by this time and the roar and swirl of the water prevented anyone from hearing our approach. It was an old man who stood there, and recognising him Hilda turned hastily away.

"It's old Griffiths," she said, in a low tone. "If he gets hold of me I shan't be able to get away for half an hour. Talk to him for a minute, there's a dear, till I get away out of sight."

Old Griffiths, as Lady Hilda called him, was a superannuated retainer of the family—very aged now, and made free of the Park and gardens. He was an inoffensive old fellow, but weak and superstitious, and to Lady Hilda and her mother a terrible bore. There was no getting away from him. He had so many complaints to pour out, and so much to

say whenever he had the chance of speaking to either of them, that I did not wonder at Hilda's running away from him. She made a detour and got away through the trees without his seeing her, and I went on past the place where he was standing looking at the water.

"Good afternoon," I said, as I went by. Everybody gave everybody else greeting at the Priory, and the old man lifted his head to reply to me. He was a fine old fellow, a splendid specimen of the true peasant; I had seen him at a distance once or twice, and heard a good deal about him, but I had never spoken to him or been close to him before, so that I was hardly prepared for the effect the sight of me seemed to have on him.

His ruddy face turned literally livid, and his eyes seemed to be starting out of his head, as he put out both hands and waved me off.

"She's come back!" he gasped, "here, in this very place; what does she want?"

"You don't know me," I said, wondering at his strange looks and words, "I am Miss Ormsby. I live at the Priory. Have I startled you?"

"No nearer!" he gasped again; "don't come any nearer. I saw her here, where I stand now, and they found her afterwards, and she can't rest. Isn't the grave deep enough!—and it's twenty years ago and more—twenty years ago!"

He was getting wildly excited, and I heartily wished that I had gone round with Hilda, and so avoided this encounter, when a man came hastily up and took the old fellow's arm to lead him away.

"He isn't always quite right here, miss," he said, touching his forehead. "I hope he hasn't frightened you."

"Oh, no, thank you," I said; "he took me for some one else, that was all." But I felt quite relieved when he took the old man away muttering still about graves and my having come back from the other world. He must have been thinking of some one he had lost, and muddled up the living and the dead in his feeble old mind. I suppose I was nervous, but I felt quite tired and depressed when I joined Hilda and her brother at the river, and half determined that I would walk by the White Lady's Pool no more as long as I should stay at Priory Park.

(To be continued.)

REPUBLICAN SIMPLICITY.—A story is related of an old Dutch merchant of Amsterdam, who, having amassed a fortune in trade, determined to spend the remnant of his life in the quiet seclusion of his country house. Before taking leave of his city friends, he invited them to dine with him. The guests, on arriving at his residence, were surprised to see the extraordinary preparations that had been made for their reception. On a plain oak table covered with a blue cloth were some wooden plates, spoons and drinking vessels. Presently two old seamen brought in dishes containing herrings—some fresh, others salted or dried. Of these the guests were invited to partake; but it was clear they had little appetite for such poor fare, and with considerable impatience they awaited the second course, which consisted of salt beef and greens. This also, when brought in, they did not seem to relish. At last the blue cloth was removed, and one of fine width damask substituted; and the guests were agreeably surprised to see a number of servants in gorgeous liveries enter with the third course, which consisted of everything necessary to form a most sumptuous banquet. The master of the house then addressed his friends in the following terms: "Such, gentlemen, has been the progress of our republic. We began with strict frugality, by means of which we became wealthy; and we end with luxury, which will beget poverty. We should, therefore, be satisfied with our beef and greens, that we may not have to return to our herrings."

LET US STEP TOGETHER.

Set your foot with mine, John,
Let us step together;
If the road be good or bad,
Fine or stormy weather,
Put your hand in mine, John,
Clasp it strongly, brother;
Strangers cannot be to us
What we're to each other.

We'd the same good father, John;
No boys had a better;
To his wisdom and his love
Both of us are debtor.
We'd the same sweet mother, too;
No boys had a sweeter;
We must love each other well,
Or how could we meet her?

When we were but little chaps,
Driving home the cattle,
Then we shared each other's talks,
Fought each other's battle.
Then we had the self-same griefs,
And the self-same pleasures,
Held in common bats and balls,
And our boyish treasures.

Now, though we are bearded men,
Still, you know, we're brothers;
Far more to each other, John,
Than we are to others.
I for you, and you for me,
In life's changing battle,
As it was in by gone days,
Driving home the cattle.

So put your foot with mine, John,
We will step together,
If the way be good or bad,
Fine or stormy weather.
Let the world go well or ill,
Put your hand in mine, brother;
Strangers cannot be to us
What we're to each other.

B. L.

YOUNG AND SO FAIR.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DOUBTS AND FEARS.

"WHAT HAVE I DONE? She can't be in love with him—she shan't be, that I swear!" said Lord Windsor to himself, in great trepidation, as he walked down the churchyard by the side of Sibel Fitzgerald, watching the colour slowly returning to her cheeks out of the corner of his eye, whilst apparently looking straight in front of him to where his groom was holding the chestnut.

"Is he much hurt?" in a low voice.
"Oh, dear no!" anxious to repair the effects of his former abruptness; "broke his little finger, or his ankle."

"His little finger would not keep him at home."

"No, must have been the ankle"—a minute of hard thought, and then, "Couldn't write—must have been his hand. Can't swear to it, upon my word, but he'll be all right in a day or two."

"When did it happen?"

"Last Thursday"—the day of the funeral.
"Had a letter from his man about—about something"—getting rather red.

"It wasn't in the papers!" she said, thoughtfully.

"It was in the *Post*, but they made a hash of his name—called him Worthington, or Sheffington. Ride on, and wait for me outside the gate of the Chestnuts"—to the groom.

"You must allow me?" taking the basket from Sibel's hand.

"But indeed, Lord Windsor!"

"Indeed, Miss Fitzgerald, I must, if you don't mind. I shall think you owe me a grudge for the other night."

"No, it was not your fault," acquiescing, because she was dying to hear further particulars about Major Lushington, "but—but I shall never forget it!" her lip trembling.

"It was hard lines on you; I felt it," switching at the head of a nettle with his ridingstick. "Believe me, I'd have given a thousand pounds to prevent it. There were fifty other girls somewhere about the place, who wouldn't be knocked down by a feather—they would have gone, and thought no more about it."

"I couldn't help it, indeed I couldn't!" looking up at him in anxious self-exculpation.
"Miss Fitzgerald, you behaved like an angel. I swear you did. But what did she want you for? That beats me!"

There was a short pause—a drove of cows insisting on inserting themselves between the two pedestrians—so that Sibel was relieved from the trouble of answering, and her cheeks had time to recover themselves, before the Earl came down from his enforced retreat into the hedge. The subject was evidently weighing on his mind, and he began again,—

"Suppose she was jealous, poor thing, of every girl who came near him. She was always mad—mad as a March hare, and this must have been her last craze."

"But I never saw Mr. Springfield before!"
"Springfield? Hope you never may again—the greatest brute out—nobody out of Bedlam could be jealous of him."

"Except his wife."
"The last person to do it—she would know him far too well. My advice to you is to forget the whole lot. They are none of them fit to come near you."

"But I thought you said there was no harm in her?"

"No harm, perhaps, but uncommonly reckless; and when a woman gets the bit between her teeth, you don't know where she will land herself. You are not the sort to be taken that way," looking down at her with frank admiration in his light blue eyes.

She sighed as she wondered what he would think of moonlight meetings, and lovers like Romeo climbing in at the window. "I only hope that whatever you hear of me you will feel sure that I never meant to do wrong."

"Whatever I hear!" he repeated in surprise. "I should like to see the man who would dare to slander you. He should swallow it pretty quick, and his front teeth as well!"

"He might think it wrong when it wasn't," looking wistfully at the darkening hills, and wishing that her life were in her hands to make a fresh beginning.

"He would be the most thundering idiot that ever was," swinging the gate back with sudden energy, for they had arrived at the Chestnuts. "Do you think if you did it I shouldn't know it was right?"

She gave him the sweetest smile that he thought he had ever seen, and held out her hand for the basket.

"Mayn't I carry it up to the house?"

"Thanks, it is quite unnecessary. By-the-by, what is the matter really with Major Lushington?" trying to speak with the utmost carelessness, although a brilliant blush did its best to betray her. "Lord Wentworth will be anxious to know."

Lord Windsor cogitated deeply over that blush before he remembered to answer. It upset him again like that sudden pallor in the churchyard. What the deuce was the meaning of it?

"Nothing much," he said, slowly. "Off his head—and I think, I really fancy his arm's damaged."

"But a broken arm would not make him delirious," self-consciousness forgotten in real alarm as she began to think the Earl was deceiving her.

He went on towards the house and she

allowed it, having forgotten her intention of parting at the gate.

"Now I think of it, there was a blow on his head as well—nothing to be alarmed at, 'pon my honour," as she gazed at him with affrighted eyes.

"Is it brain fever? Please tell me," she said, constraining herself to speak quietly.

"Not half as bad as that," he said, quickly. "Only concussion—no, what do you call it? concussion of the brain. A mere trifle, always comes after a blow on the head."

"It's very dangerous—I'm sure it is," in an awe-struck voice.

"I'd have it to-morrow to make you look like that," in a low tone.

"I wish—I wish I had known it before!"

He looked at her curiously. Why did she wish she had known it—she couldn't be wanting to go to him?

"Won't you come in?" she said, as they reached the door.

"Thanks, it's rather late," feeling sure from her manner that he wasn't wanted. "Hope Lord Wentworth's quite well? I'll come over and see him in a day or two. Good-bye."

"Good-bye. My love to Lady Windsor."

"Supposing I keep it myself?" growing red at his own impatience, as he bent over her hand. There was something in this girl, in spite of her youth and simplicity, which sometimes made him feel almost shy.

"You couldn't," she said, quietly, as she drew away her hand. "It would be sheer embezzlement."

"Punishment—loss of freedom as a bachelor, and life-long servitude in Miss Fitzgerald's fetters." With a stupendously low bow, he turned away, and slowly walked down the drive, whilst she opened the door, hurried across the hall, and went into the library in breathless haste. Lord Wentworth was sitting in his usual arm-chair—his book lying across his knees, and his eyes closed. Hugh was sitting in the window trying to read by the failing light, and the fire looked as if it was on the point of extinction.

Not perceiving Macdonald, she went straight up to Lord Wentworth, too much agitated in herself to be afraid of disturbing him.

"Major Lushington is very ill," she said, pantingly. "And what will he think of me?"
"My dear, where did you hear this?" and the Viscount sat bolt upright.

"From Lord Windsor. I met him in the road, and he walked up with me."

"And you have been walking alone with him?" a slight frown contracting his forehead.
"Yes, only from Thornfield church; but isn't it dreadful—he will think me so terribly unkind!"

"I think you have been quite the reverse."

"Major Lushington, I mean," the tears coming into her eyes. "I would give anything not to have written that odious letter!"

"You wrote by my advice, and I am far from regretting it. But this is very sudden—did he tell you what the illness was?"

"I had to drag it out of him, bit by bit. He is so odd, he didn't seem to like to tell me. It was a railway accident; at first he said it was nothing, but it came out that Major Lushington had broken his arm or his ankle, and got concussion of the brain. You don't think he will die?" her voice sinking, her hands clasped together.

Lord Wentworth smiled compassionately, surprised at her evident emotion. Did she care for the fellow, after all?

"If there had been the slightest danger your friend, Mrs. Hay, would have been sure to write to you. I think you may make your mind easy on that score. It is strange we never saw it in the papers."

"They made a mistake in the name. But he will think me so heartless and unkind," the tears running down her cheeks. "Perhaps they gave him my letter just when he was in the greatest pain."

"You may be quite sure if you had written him a dozen letters it would have made a lot

difference. It would not be of much use to show him a letter of any kind, when he must be either delirious or unconscious."

"Delirious or unconscious!" she repeated, with pale lips, "how awful it sounds! I've treated him so badly, and never even got up to wish him good-bye that last morning!"

"You saw him again, remember," said a voice from the window.

She started violently, and dried her eyes as if she were ashamed of her tears.

"I did not know you were in the room."

"Shall I leave it?" said Hugh, coming forward, with a book in his hand, and looking ready to disappear at once.

"Why should you? You are not so fond of Major Lushington that it will distress you too much to know of his illness."

"I see it is time to dress," he said, drily, evading an answer, as he left the room.

Sibel stood still on the hearthrug, her head drooping, her fingers playing nervously with her gloves. When she was in trouble, Major Lushington's first thought had been to come to her assistance; she had made use of him to escape from her difficulties, and repaid him with unkindness, suspicion, and neglect. Her heart smote her terribly, and she was ready to do anything on earth to prove that she really loved him—although she knew that she did not love him, and never could. Her impulses sprang from the most generous motives, but, nevertheless, rarely failed to lead her into mischief; and at this moment she was capable of the most Quixotic action, which she might regret to the last day of her life. Suddenly she knelt down by Lord Wentworth's chair. He looked at her kindly, wondering what she was going to say.

"My dear child, don't be afraid," as he saw that she was hesitating.

"Do you think I ought to go to him?" in a shy whisper, her eyes fixed upon his face, as if she would read the answer there. It changed and became exceedingly grave.

"Certainly not, quite impossible."

"Thank you, I only wanted to know." She got up from her knees, and remarking, like Hugh, that it was time to dress, went out of the room.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IMMEDIATE!

A WEEK passed away, all too quickly for Hugh Macdonald, who did not want to go back to Oxford just yet. All too slowly for Sibel Fitzgerald, who was watching for the postman as the days crept by, with a keen anxiety such as she had never known before in her life. She did not understand her own feelings; she could think of nothing but Major Lushington tossing on his sick bed at Woolwich. All her doubts concerning him vanished; he was true to her, she felt perfectly certain, and if she could only hear him, he was calling to her in his wild delirium, and wondering why she would not come.

She grew reserved in her manner to Hugh, and for a whole week refused to let him have a single glimpse of "the other side of the page." The boy felt her coldness acutely, but was too proud to complain. In an off-hand manner he declared his intention of spending his last night with the Forresters, as he might not have another opportunity of seeing Phil before he joined his new regiment.

Sibel accepted the intelligence with great equanimity, and begged that he would give her love to Rose and her brother.

"Why should you send it to Phil?" he asked, jealously. "I remember that last morning when he came to fetch you away, you actually let him kiss you."

"Of course I did! He is my first cousin."

"And I?" raising his eyebrows discontentedly. "What am I?"

"One of my first friends."

"Only one of them?"

"Well, you can't be two," with a smile.

"But I might be the first, or the best."

"You forget Lord Wentworth."

"Oh! he's an old man, quite out of the running. Look here, Sibel," fixing his beautiful eyes on her face with intense earnestness; "make me one promise, and I'll try to be content."

"I mistrust your content. You are always so grasping. Pray what am I to do?" looking up at him with a quiet smile.

He did not smile, and his gravity became almost tragic.

"Promise to kiss me once before I die."

"Before you die!" with a vague uneasiness. Did he feel ill? He was always pale, but the dark shadows under his eyes seemed to look darker than ever. "I wish you wouldn't talk such nonsense!"

"It is no nonsense. The doctors say I may go off at any moment. Surely you don't grudge me a promise like that?"

"I am willing to promise, but I hope I shall never have to keep it."

"Why? It wasn't much to ask!" rising from his seat, and looking down at her with some resentment in his glance.

"You don't understand; but never mind."

"I do mind! Perhaps you will be good enough to explain."

"I should like to die first, and leave all my friends behind."

"And I should never grumble at going, if I might take one of them with me," starting at her, but not seeming to see her, because of the far-off look in his eyes.

The look made her uncomfortable. He was at all times unlike other boys, and to-day there was a strange melancholy about him that she could not understand. She rose hurriedly, and coming close to him laid her hand upon his coat sleeve.

"You are not keeping anything from me, Hugh?"

"No. Not that you would care if I did!" looking down on that small hand, and not daring to touch it.

"I should care! You don't know how much."

"You like to play with me!" hoarsely, as if he had suddenly developed a sore throat.

"I never did, but you are always unkind to me now," and before he had time to guess her intention she had walked out of the room.

Her eyes were full of tears, and the sun was pouring through the stained-glass window in the hall—two facts which may account for her not seeing Manser advancing, with a tall figure behind him.

The tall figure darted forward, and she found herself face to face with Lord Windsor. He shook hands with suppressed eagerness.

"You are going out. May I come with you?" looking at the hat which she was holding in her hand.

"But Lord Wentworth is indoors, and you came to see him."

"And you," in a low voice.

That aside decided her, and she led the way into the drawing-room, telling Manser to inform Lord Wentworth and Mr. Macdonald that the Earl was there.

She sat down on a low chair by the window, and he took a seat just opposite to her, his eyeglass in position, his collar as stiff as ever, his trousers having that peculiar tightness which horseymen must affect, and his coat of an aggressive plaid.

"I hope Lady Windsor is quite well," she began, politely, feeling rather embarrassed by his fixed stare.

"She sent you a message—wants you to come to the Court—dine and sleep as long as you like."

"She is very kind," with difficulty repressing a smile, wondering why she was to sleep so much if she dined away from home.

"You are not going to say no?" his eyeglass dropping out of place, and his face assuming an expression of great earnestness, which contrasted comically with his general appearance. "Now, really, Miss Fitzgerald, 'pon my word, it would be too cruel. I know

we are desperately slow, and the Court's a melancholy hole, but—"

"It's nothing of the kind. How can you abuse your home?"

"It is a hole—at least, I thought so till the other night. Now, this is a charming place," looking round the comfortable drawing-room, where every piece of furniture seemed to have a character and a charm of its own, and every vase was filled with primroses and violets.

"It is very simple—not grand, like the Court."

"I love simplicity. Those thingamajigs in the vases—they are awfully jolly."

"Anyone can have them."

"We can't—our gardener always stuffs them full of stupid things out of the houses."

"Is that a stupid thing in your button-hole?"

"No," getting very red. "You gave me a lily, so I thought you wouldn't object to having this," taking out a lovely yellow rose, and placing it on her lap.

"It is charming," taking it up and smelling it; "but, please, you must put it back!"

"But why? I brought it on purpose."

"You are very kind," smiling, in spite of herself at the consternation in his face; "but it is against my rule."

"What rule? I never heard of such a thing. You weren't like this the other night!"

"No, but I mean to be different," priding herself on her resolution.

"Don't. You couldn't be more charming."

"But I feel as if I had grown older since then."

"It is barely a fortnight ago," with raised eyebrows, and a speculative gaze, as he wondered what the deuce she was driving at.

"I know, but a good deal has happened, and I mean to be—quite—very particular for the future," feeling some difficulty in expressing herself.

"Quite right. Don't have anything to do with cads—do a great deal of harm, especially to women. But there's nothing caddish about this," he added, cheerfully. "Grown in one of our own houses, and never been in any hands but mine. I wouldn't let Merton pick it. Come, you can't refuse it, after that!" holding it out, whilst she gently pushed it away.

"I mean it, Lord Windsor," she said, very quietly.

The next moment he started to his feet, flung the rose on the ground with an angry exclamation, and stamped on it, looking perfectly white with fury.

Just then the Viscount came in, followed by Hugh Macdonald.

Both looked in surprise from the girl's heated face to the Earl's white one, but Lord Wentworth at least was too well bred to betray anything by his manner.

"Glad to see you, Windsor. Why didn't you come in time for luncheon?"

He muttered something about choosing a horse, and the roads being heavy, shook hands with Hugh, and then seemed inclined to let the conversation drop altogether, as far as he himself was concerned.

Nothing more was said about the invitation to the Court, and Sibel began to wonder if it had originated in his own brain. His sudden ebullition of temper had given her a glimpse of his real character, and when his eyes were turned away from her she took the opportunity of studying his face to see if there were any signs of latent ferocity in the expression of his features.

Hugh's manner was cold and reserved, as if he were inclined to visit on the son the sins of his father, and Sibel was amused to see the half-offended way in which he kept drawing back, at the smallest show of friendliness on the Earl's part. Invited to spend two or three days at the Court—he was going back to Oxford, so must decline—begged to ride over that very afternoon, and give them a helping-hand in some theatrical nonsense—sorry, but it was his last night at the Chestnuts, and he could not leave Lord Wentworth.

Lord Windsor expostulated with unusual animation, but the boy was firm, and his mouth took an expression of resolution, which rarely appeared on his softly curved lips, but when it came showed that nothing would move him. As they were discussing a poaching-case which had happened not long before, Manser came in with a letter, which he handed to Sibel, saying respectfully,—

"I thought I had better bring it in, miss!"

She saw that it was marked "Immediate," and opened it hastily, with a strange sinking at her heart. She read it in breathless haste, then started to her feet.

"Anything the matter?" inquired Lord Wentworth, whilst Hugh watched her changing colour with eager eyes.

"Yes, I must start for Woolwich at once!"

All had risen, and were regarding her with different expressions. Lord Wentworth looked annoyed and doubtful, as if he were not sure of giving his consent; Hugh perfectly indignant, and the Earl frankly amazed.

"Is it a case of imperative necessity, because, otherwise, I really think there are the strongest reasons against it?"

"I don't care!" excitedly, whilst the tears gathered in her eyes; "he is worse, and I have no right to stay away!"

"Wait a minute. Does Lushington say so himself?"

"Lushington!" exclaimed the Earl, involuntarily, arrested in his progress to the door. His face became crimson to the roots of his hair, and then as white as his own collar.

"No, Mrs. Hay. I am to sleep at her house, and she will go with me. Don't stop me, please, or I shall never forgive myself!" she added, imploringly. "Read her letter, and you'll see I have no choice!"

She thrust the letter into the old man's hand, and turned to Hugh, who looked pale and stern.

"Won't you find out the trains for me?"

"It is the maddest thing you ever did; but, of course, I shall come with you!"

"Oh, no, you mustn't leave him!" looking at Lord Wentworth.

"Do you suppose he would let you go alone?"

"By-the-bye, where's Windsor?" asked the Viscount, as he folded up the letter, and looked round the room.

"Gone!" said Macdonald, as there was the clatter of horses' hoofs on the carriage-drive.

"I am afraid we were very rude. I never saw him go. As to this letter," tapping it with his thin, aristocratic hand, "you know best whether Mrs. Hay is a sensible woman or no. She seems to think that there is a necessity; and I can understand your feeling that in a case of illness you are obliged to stretch a point for the sake of common charity. But you must remember that by this decided step you pledge yourself more irrevocably than you have done as yet, and there has been no explanation of the painful circumstances under which you saw him last," he added, very gravely.

"I know," clasping her hands together, "but, of course, he will explain."

"Trust him to do that," said Hugh, under his breath.

He was nearly wild at the thought of her throwing herself into Lushington's arms just when he had begun to fancy there was a loophole of escape, and deep down in his resentful heart a conviction was born that the whole thing, as the Americans say, was a "plant" from the beginning. Acting on this sudden thought, he broke out eagerly,—

"Let me go first. I could be there and back again before you had gone to bed!"

"What would be the good of that?" lifting her wet lashes in surprise.

"Just to see there's no mistake," colouring slightly under her grave eyes.

"I think, perhaps, that might be the better plan," said Lord Wentworth, thoughtfully.

"And he might die whilst I was waiting. No, I must go at once. Dear Lord Wentworth,

don't be angry," the tears running down her cheeks, "it is my duty."

"I am not angry, but I think you are rash."

"Perhaps I may take Wilton?"

"Certainly, and Mrs. Upperton, too, if you like."

"I am coming," said Hugh, shortly.

"I should be sorry to take you there," with a reproachful glance, as she hurried out of the room.

"And I should go with you if it were to death or ruin!" he said, almost savagely, as he followed her out into the hall and caught her up at the foot of the stairs. There was intense agitation in his face as he laid his hand upon her arm. "Sibel, don't be angry. For Heaven's sake, consider!"

She shook him off impatiently.

"If you ever cared for me don't stop me now."

Then she ran upstairs and left him on the mat with wild unreasoning fury in his heart, and a curse at woman's folly on his lips.

CHAPTER XXX.

A SICK MAN'S PRAYER.

It was late in the evening when they reached Woolwich, and drove straight from the station to Colonel Hay's house on the left-hand side of the common.

The two travellers had scarcely exchanged a word since they left Thornfield. Sibel was too much occupied with her wild anxiety to be able to speak on any other than the one subject, which she felt to be forbidden; and Hugh was too much disgusted and disappointed at the whole affair to wish to make himself agreeable.

As the cab stopped at the door of the red-brick villa Sibel felt a choking sensation in her throat, and her hand trembled in Macdonald's clasp as he helped her out. Their arrival had evidently been expected, for the door was thrown open before Hugh had raised his hand to the knocker; and Mrs. Hay, a boxy-looking woman of forty-five, bustled out on to the steps.

"Oh, my dearest child!" she exclaimed, fervently, as she clasped the tired girl in her arms; "I am so thankful you have come!"

"Are we in time?" said Sibel, hoarsely, almost afraid to ask the question for fear lest the answer might be "too late."

"Yes, thank Heaven."

"Can I go to him at once?"

"Yes, he is here; we had him moved this morning."

"Then he must be much better," said Hugh, sharply.

"Mr. Hugh Macdonald," said Sibel, hastily; then noting the look of surprise as Mrs. Hay bowed and held out her hand to the handsome young man, she added, "he is Lord Wentworth's ward, and like a brother to me."

"Dear me, I am sure I am very glad to see him. Colonel Hay is in the dining-room. You must be starving, so we'll dine at once."

"But I only had the pleasure of escorting Miss Fitzgerald. The cab is waiting to take me to the nearest hotel."

"Then you had better dismiss it at once, for my husband would never forgive me if I let you go. Here he is to speak for himself," as the dining-room door opened, and a bald-headed military-looking man with a short tawny beard and a stout figure came out, and with a cordial smile took Sibel's hands in both of his. "Delighted to see you!"

Hugh was introduced and made so welcome, that, in spite of his determination not to encroach on their hospitality, he was obliged to give way. Mrs. Hay led Sibel up to her room, untied her bonnet-strings, took off her jacket, poured out some hot water, and made herself affectionately useful, purring over her young friend like a kindly domestic cat.

Having smoothed her hair and washed her hands, Sibel turned to her eagerly. "Mayn't I go to him now?" She had something of the

feeling of a man who was going through an operation. She wished to go through it at once, and get it over. Added to which, she honestly thought that in his dangerous state it would be barbarous to wait, and the idea of dinner under such circumstances was repulsive.

"But, my dear! you must have something to eat!"

Sibel shook her head.

"Well, I won't keep you, he has been dying to see you. Remember how ill he has been, and don't agitate him more than you can help!"

She took up a candlestick, and opening the door led the way down a broad passage till they reached another which crossed it at right angles. There was a door at the end of this passage which was slightly ajar, and a stream of subdued light filtered from it into the twilight.

"Now, my dear, pray be calm," said Mrs. Hay, pushing it open, an injunction which made the girl's heart seem as if it would jump out of her breast as it thundered in her ears. "Major," she said in that irritating half-whisper that some people seem to think appropriate to an invalid. "I have brought you something which will do you more good than any amount of medicine." Then after a rapid glance round to see if everything was in proper order, she went quickly out of the room and shut the door behind her. Feeling painfully nervous, Sibel gave a glance towards the bed which stood in a recess. To her surprise it was empty, and as her eyes came back to the sofa which was drawn close by the side of the fireplace, with a sudden revulsion of feeling she wished herself back at the Chestnuts—anywhere but in Major Lushington's room. The next moment she was kneeling by the sofa, her hand clasped in his, his white face close to hers. "My darling, you've come at last!"

He turned with a slight groan and looked into her eyes with the fondest yearning in his own. At the sight of his broken arm, tied up in a crimson silk scarf, his drawn cheeks and close-cropped hair, one big tear after another rolled down her cheeks, and she told herself that she was thankful that she had come.

The tenderness of her warm little heart was stirred to the uttermost; a sob rose in her throat, and stopped her words. He passed his left arm round her neck, and drew her gently down with a passionate appeal in eyes and lips. As he was so weak she yielded, and the proud head was lowered till it rested close beside his on the pillow. Then he turned a little farther round and kissed her, slow lingering caresses, in which he at last satisfied the pent-up longing in his wayward heart.

For a long time there was silence, which he did not care to break; at last, as she drew herself away, he said, with a happy sigh,—

"I bless that train for having nearly smashed me."

"Why? when it brought you such pain."

"Because it brought you as well, my darling—my dearest one—and I thought I was going to lose you. Yow seemed to care less about me now that the scrape was forgotten."

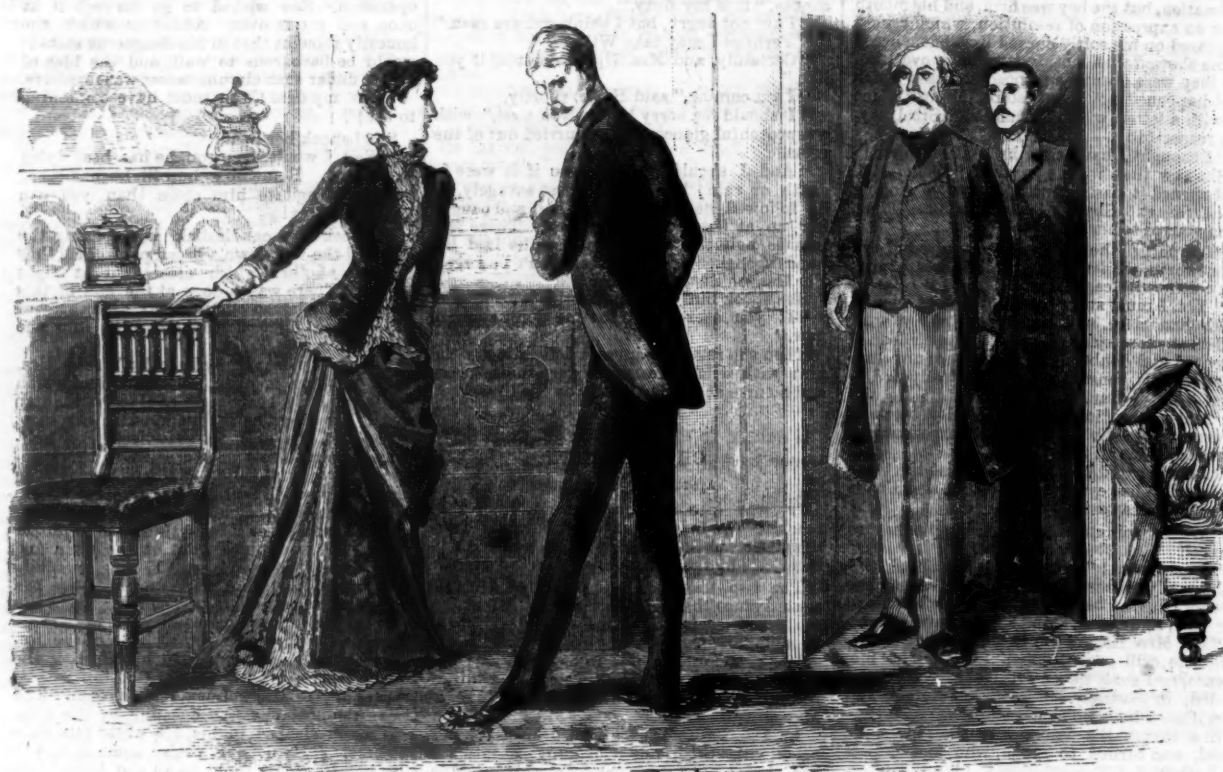
"Don't say that, as if it were only a bargain."

"It was a bargain—a most happy bargain for me. You couldn't do without me because of a certain adventure, and I couldn't do without you because I set my heart on you."

His voice was weak, and lower than it used to be, but he did not speak like a man who was hovering on the borders of life and death. Still some people possess a wonderful amount of vitality, which lends them a fictitious brightness even when their last moment is approaching, and she supposed this was the case with her lover. His cheeks were certainly hollow, and his moustaches, which used to be so carefully tended, had grown out of shape, and hung down so low that it almost concealed his under lip.

"Did you know I was coming?" she asked, after a pause.

"Yes, I felt as if I should die without you."



[HE FLUNG THE ROSE TO THE GROUND AND STAMPED ON IT WITH FURY AS LORD WENTWORTH CAME IN, FOLLOWED BY HUGH.]

I have not been out of bed for I don't know how long; but I insisted on being put on this sofa to-day because they told me you might be here. Child, should you have been sorry to lose me?" looking at her with eager eyes, that seemed as if they would read her heart.

Her lashes fell, but she answered at once, "Yer, of course I should. How can you ask?" "I've been very bad," his voice growing faint, "and all the while I had a nightmare that some one was plotting to take you from me. It wasn't true?"

"No," remembering that neither Lord Wentworth's advice, nor Hugh's expostulations could possibly be called a plot.

"And now I want you to promise never to forsake me."

"My first promise is enough."

"But I want another. You don't know how this fever has unhinged my mind; I lie awake for hours fancying all sorts of things about you. You always seem to be slipping away from me, and I struggling hopelessly to get you back." He closed his eyes as if in pain, and again her foolish heart was moved to excessive compassion.

"I never will forsake you," she said, softly, "never—never—never!"

"Oh, Heaven!" he muttered beneath his breath, as a sudden dampness brought by intense emotion gathered on his forehead.

"Can I get you anything—some *sal volatile* or brandy?" she asked, in alarm, because, to her excited imagination, he looked as if he were about to die before her eyes.

"No, no—you do me more good than all, Sibel." He opened his eyes and spoke very low, "That uncle of yours is a tyrant; he deserves to be punished. When I am better—able to get about—why should we wait?"

"I don't understand." Seized with a vague alarm she tried to rise from her knees, but he gently detained her.

"If we may marry at the end of three years

there would be no sin in doing it sooner. Dearest, could you promise to marry me in six weeks or two months?"

He looked up into her face with a passionate appeal.

A vivid colour rose to her cheeks, then left them deathly pale. "He wouldn't let me."

"Why ask him?" in the softest whisper. "No one need know till it is all over."

"No no, I couldn't do it."

"Darling, it is the only way; you must," trying to draw her towards him. She covered her face with her hands to hide his imploring eyes, and trembled violently.

"I have been building on this—you wouldn't be so cruel as to disappoint me. Darling, my very life may depend on it!"

"Your life!" she stammered.

"Yes, give me hope and I shall have strength; refuse, and you may kill me," his voice sinking as he watched her, knowing so well that delay might be fatal, knowing that if she would only consent the prize would be his, and no man would have the power to take it from him.

She dropped her hands and looked at him in great agitation; still he watched her breathlessly, afraid to speak lest one hasty word might spoil it. Her lips parted—his heart beat almost to suffocation—would it be yes or no? Then there came a sudden rap at the door, and a voice, which he recognised with loathing as Hugh Macdonald's, said in cautious tones suited to a sick-room—

"Sibel, Mrs. Hay is tired of waiting for you."

The girl started to her feet.

In an instant she remembered that to yield to her lover's prayer would be the blackest treachery to Lord Wentworth, that, carried away by compassion, she was on the point of committing a grievous wrong, and one glance at her face told Major Lushington that her answer was "No."

Just when he was sure of her she escaped and it was all owing to that confounded boy! If curses could have killed, Hugh Macdonald would have died that night.

(To be continued.)

MR. ARTHUR WELLESLEY PEEL, the new Speaker of the House of Commons, is the youngest son of the late Right Hon. Sir Robert Peel, and was born in 1829. On the accession of the present Government in 1880 he filled for a time the office of Under-Secretary for the Home Department. Mr. Peel is a D.L. and J.P. for Warwickshire, and J.P. for Bedfordshire. The late Speaker has been created Viscount Hampden of Glynde.

LONGFELLOW AT WESTMINSTER.—Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey has just received a valuable addition in the bust of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, executed by Mr. Thomas Brock, A.R.A. With only a photograph to aid him in the work the sculptor has produced the finest likeness of the poet that has yet been executed, as judged by those who were most intimate with him. His daughters and his personal friend, Mr. James Russell Lowell, the American Minister, have expressed much satisfaction at the manner in which the finest characteristics of features have been reproduced. The expression of tranquil poetic feeling and power of intellect that can be little more than indicated in a photograph has found expression in the marble. The bust has been placed between the tomb of Chaucer and the bust of Dryden. The inscription on the front of the pedestal is as follows:—"This bust was placed among the memorials of the poets of England by the English admirers of an American poet, 1884." On one of the sides has been inscribed—"Born at Portland, U.S.A., Feb. 27th, 1807," and on the other—"Died at Cambridge, U.S.A., March 24th, 1882."



["TELL ME, ARE YOU HURT! I DESIRE YOU TO ANSWER ME," HE WHISPERED.]

NOVELETTE I.

WAS SHE TRUE?

CHAPTER I.

"LOVELY AS A ROSE."

"You do grieve me, dear child, to see you so different from other girls."

"But why, mother mine! Surely you do not wish to part from me—who who have no one now but your Sassie, since dear Louise is engaged?"

"That is not what I mean, love. You do not quite understand my feelings," said Lady Musgrave, gently. "You must know that I would grieve intensely to part from you, sweet child, but the old must sacrifice their feelings for the young. My life is nearly over, yours has only just commenced," this sadly.

"Do not say such a thing, mother dear. Why you look more like our sister than anything else!" said Sassie, twining her dimpled white arms around her mother's neck lovingly. "My anxiety is, that should you be left—and, forgive me, Sassie, I must speak out—you would be left alone—quite alone."

"What should I care if all the world was gone if you were not here to love me?" exclaimed Sassie, with tear-bedewed eyes. "You have been my companion, friend, father, mother, all, ever since I can remember. Oh! do not make me miserable, sweet, little mother. You do not feel any pain that I know not of?"

"Dear, loving child, no," replied Lady Musgrave, reassuringly. "Cannot you see that the wealth of your loving heart must not be thrown entirely away on an old woman, although she happens to be your mother?"

"Oh, I see it all now!" said the lovely girl, laughing, disclosing a double row of little, pearly teeth; it's because I wouldn't accept Lord Truman. Bother him! Why I think him a complete ninny—all cuffs, collar, and white

handkerchief; and, to smell him—oh, dear, isn't it awful? a perfumer's is nothing to him."

"For shame, Sassie!" said her mother, trying to look reproachful, but failing entirely. "I do not think it at all fair or kind to laugh at a man who is so good and true. Whatever his little eccentricities may be, he is a gentleman even in them."

"Oh! don't look so serious, you dear, little mother, or I'll— Well, I won't say what. But you will promise not to mention his name again; it teases me immensely—upon my word it does, there!" and the wilful girl heaved a sigh of relief, as much as to say, "It's out now, and I am happy."

"Then you really mean to refuse him ultimately, Sassie?"

"Yes, most decidedly, nothing on earth will alter my determination! I consider him a dreadful goose to dream for one moment that I would alter my decision. Does he think I am a child to change my mind? He is a nasty mean fellow to come ingratiating himself in your good graces to enlist your influence and sympathy. Were I a man I'd scorn to sue where I was once refused."

"Ah! that's because you have never cared for anyone sufficiently, my child. If ever you do that will make a great difference in your nature, I am sure."

"Well, that will never be, for I do not think there is a man created that I could really feel a downright admiration for."

"Not even Digby?" said Lady Musgrave, obidingly.

"Surely you do not wish me to admire my future brother-in-law?" she returned, with a provoking little pout.

"Why, pray, does he not deserve to be esteemed and liked by the family he will some day become a member of?"

"Well, mother dear, you always worst me in an argument, so I'll cry defeat. But I will make a solemn compact with you"—this in a bantering little way all her own. "When I

find a really good, handsome fellow like Digby who does not addle his brains concerning the fit or set of his collars and coats, and does you with the points of his horses, dogs, &c., I will give a verdict of quite a different kind. Until this *rara avis* arrives I must hold to my opinions, and give the prize to Digby Glendive."

It was a pretty domestic picture. The winter sun shed its cold, silvery rays dancing sprightly about the elegant room, alighting with its steely radiance on the soft, shaded spray of roses. The elder lady was working and transforming everything, as by a fairy wand, into rich fantastic hues that an artist would have given half a lifetime to have portrayed on canvas.

Sassie leaned back listlessly in her low rocking-chair, her arms stretched behind her little amber head, the dainty frills of lace just exposing the white, soft, rounded arms; her large, clear, grey eyes with their dark fringes drooping over her rounded cheek; a chin that Michael Angelo might have hewn, a short upper lip, and deeply curved mouth that never assumed the same expression five minutes together.

Lady Musgrave sat on stitching, a sweet smile on her gentle face, one that retained its purity of beauty, notwithstanding a look of resigned sadness which made her appear more like a saint. It was the expression of repressed sorrow lived down bravely for the sake of her two children whom she had existed only for, since the day her young husband was brought home lifeless, his fair head bedabbled in mud, his eyes that had never looked but with tenderness and love on his beautiful, young wife, closed for ever.

From that hour Lady Musgrave's hair turned a silvery white, and it added a charm to the features, giving them an angelic sweetness that gained the appellation of "our beautiful little mother" from her two daughters.

Sassie was in a brown study, thinking what a beautiful subject this room would make, all glowing in colour, with its dark ruby and gold satin furniture, Venetian mirrors and Indian cabinets, and bowls of choice flowers, and bright, blazing fire dancing and leaping joyously in the polished steel grate, and the graceful, black velvet robed figure of the gentle lady, who sat with one small velvet foot resting negligently on a footstool.

"Shall I ever look like her?" sighed Sassie. "If I thought I should not I would not care to live. Why do I go searching for subjects for my brush when here is one of the loveliest in the world?"

"A penny for your thoughts, dear child," said her mother, breaking the silence.

"They are worth far more than a penny. I was thinking that you would make a nice subject for a picture."

"Really, you will make me vain, child!" said her ladyship, smiling, and patting the fair head affectionately.

"Will you sit for me one day in this room, if I am very good?" she said, coaxingly.

"Surely, you can find a better subject, Sassie, than I could be."

"But I say I cannot! Now promise, like a dear, kind, little pat as you are," she persisted.

"If you are determined in this fancy I suppose I must grant it; but take care, little man-hater, lest you, one day, come pleading for another subject, and that one not your foolish old mother," she said, mischievously.

"What, to make a picture of?" said the saucy Sassie, laughing merrily. "I pity the man I made a picture of! If he ever set eyes on it he would be a fit member for a lunatic asylum. It would only be his ugliness and oddities that would be an incentive to immortalize him," and with a sudden jump she ran out of the room, humming the old ditty "I'll be no submissive wife, no, not I; go to bed at half-past nine, no, not I."

In a few minutes she returned, ready for walking, clad in a seal-skin coat and dainty little hat and muff, the soft, rich fur setting off the delicate features, and yellow braids that lay gathered in a knot beneath her small hat.

"I am off now, mother mine; mind and don't wait luncheon, because I have some good things here to feast upon," holding up her bag-muff, exultingly. "Martha would make me take them; and the days are so short, that now armed with this commissariat I can stay on till dark."

"I am sure you will catch your death of cold in that draughty place, my love," said her ladyship, anxiously. "How long will this picture take?"

"About another week, not longer. You will admire it though, when it's finished. See, it's a delicious day, and the walk will do me no end of good; besides, the Museum is delightfully warm, so you need not be under any anxiety about me."

In another minute the radiant figure was skipping downstairs, singing to herself like a young bird, careless and free, longing to be out in the fresh, frosty air, to bask in the sunshine with the hopeful elasticity of youth, health, and spirits.

On she tripped through Kensington Gardens, looking with sparkling eyes at the floating ice on the Serpentine, and feeling in her sandwich-case for some of her goodies to feast the swans that swarmed around her, arching their graceful necks coaxingly and trustfully.

She lingered among them, first feeding one, then another, till her stock was well-nigh gone.

Looking ruefully at her case, which she had been dipping in unconsciously, she said,—

"No, no, you greedy pets, you have had your share, so adieu till to-morrow; I must away."

Many admiring eyes watched the graceful figure as she walked along briskly towards the South Kensington Museum, her destination.

"Here I am at last!" she murmured, "and there is a capital light if it will hold out long enough."

CHAPTER II.

HIS IDEAL.

SASSIE was seated before the fine work of art she was copying, lost in her occupation, her lips parted with pleasurable excitement, as, palette in hand, she worked on, the sun glinting upon the little braided amber head, and the rosy-tipped fingers, that fluttered here and there among her brushes, selecting colours, and dressing her palette.

She sat on in happy unconsciousness, her clear, grey eyes, intently fixed on her easel, perfectly absorbed in her art.

Little dreamt she that a gentleman was looking earnestly at the graceful figure with eyes that were transfixed with admiration! He was the rapt gaze of a true artist, and he had come with the same object as Sassie, to study.

But his sketch-book lay unopened; the young painter had found one of Heaven's greatest creations to study from instead of man's.

Yet it was only a fair girl, with large pensive eyes, a rosebud mouth, dewy and sweet as a spring morning, that caused him to forget his errand, and to send a thrill of unknown ecstasy to course through his veins that he had never experienced before.

She still sat on, and the evening light, cold and grey, slanted through the doors, making the gallery look weird and shadowy, and the silent watcher still stole covert glances at Sassie, who now commenced putting up her things in preparation for leaving just as the magic wand of light and brilliancy turned the place into a palace of varied hues.

"How lovely she is!" he said to himself, "the ideal of my dreams. I would give all I possess to make a picture of her, one to live with me for ever."

He was a tall, but slightly built man, with the dreamy face of a poetical nature—dark, deep-set eyes, that flashed only when aroused by the fire of admiration for his favourite pursuits—painting and poetry.

"Dear me, mamma and Louie will be waiting tea," she thought, drawing on her gloves hurriedly, and hastening down the broad staircase. "How cold it is, too!"—this as she tucked her little gloved hands cozily into her muff.

While Sassie had been in the Museum one of those strange freaks of the atmosphere had taken place; a smart shower of sleet had saturated the pavements, followed by a sharp, cutting frost, rendering the streets highly dangerous to pedestrians.

She tripped along in blissful ignorance of her danger, wondering if Lady Mesgrave had sent the brougham, when lo! she slipped down the glassy steps, and would have hurt herself severely but for the timely aid of her unknown worshippers.

"Oh, thank you very much!" she said, as he caught her supple form around the waist in a moment when she had lost her balance.

"Are you hurt?" he asked anxiously.

"Oh no, you saved me just in time," she replied gratefully, as she disengaged herself from his protecting arms, and tried to look into the face of this man who had come to her rescue in her need, and whose voice seemed so sweet and musical.

Before he had time to reply a brougham came through the misty darkness, and his lovely dream-face girl added,—

"Believe me, I am very, very grateful, but I am all safe now. Good-bye!"—this as she put her little hand into his; and she was being whirled away as he stood, "dazed—bewitched, some would say—hat in hand, perfectly oblivious of the pitiless cold and sleet that was beating on his uncovered head."

"How handsome he was!" murmured Sassie, as she sat muffled up cozily, her feet perched on the footwarmer that her mother had thoughtfully placed in the carriage. "He saved me from a nasty fall. I wonder where he sprang from? I never saw a sign of a man on the

staircase? I wonder if he was in the gallery. Heigho! what is the use of perplexing one's brains"—this with a little yawn. "He certainly came in the nick of time, that ought to be sufficient."

But somehow she could not dismiss the subject from her thoughts; they would stray away from ordinary topics to the noble-looking cavalier with the deep, musical voice and piercing eyes that even the dim afternoon could not shroud from her curious furtive glances as he held her in his protecting clasp.

"Quite a little romance," she said, softly.

"I would like to see him again; perhaps he will be there to-morrow. If he is I will thank him for his timely assistance—that would only be right. Why even mamma would not object to that, though he is a stranger!" She seemed to fancy some apology was necessary for her transient fancies.

Keith Glendive strolled along the Brompton-road in a kind of blissful trance, the hand Sassie had taken in hers still tingled with a warm, sweet glow.

Little cared he for the biting north-east wind that blew, cutting and raw, around the corners of roads and streets. He seemed treading on air, and the frosty breeze only braced him up like a restorative.

At last he found himself at Hyde Park Corner, and it flashed across his brain that he was in one of the busiest, though still fashionable quarters of town, and that he had some distance yet before he reached his rooms.

"Hillo! old man, what ails you to-night?" said his friend, the dashing young guardsman, who was seated at the blazing fire, feet on the bars, his body rocking to and fro in one of Keith's most comfortable chairs, a fragrant cigar in his girlish mouth.

"Oh, nothing in particular; a fit of the blues, attributable to the bitter weather. Glass down four degrees below freezing is not quite a charming kind of feeling."

"No, you are right there. How is the picture progressing, old fellow? Done much lately?"

"No," grumbled Keith; "there, the wrath will out. The fact is, I—I—hang it, I can't tell you!"

"Then it's something awfully awful!" said young Egerton Tyrie, opening his violet eyes wide in anxious curiosity, adding, "I hope, Keith, old fellow, you haven't been led into anything that will make you sorry in the future—gambling at the club? I know they play deucedly high at yours."

"Set your mind at ease, Egerton," he said, laughing at the long face his friend pulled. "It's only a pair of gray eyes belonging to the sweetest, fairest girl in the world that has set me thinking."

"Oh! is that all?" replied Tyrie, as he gave vent to a prolonged whistle. "Why, that is but a natural state of things. But, first of all, tell a fellow who she is, where you met her, &c. &c.?"

"Who she is I cannot say," he said, dolefully. "That she is a lady I could bet my halidome on; she is perfectly divine!"

"Oh! draw it mild, Keith, or I shall believe you are love-mad," said the mischievous guardsman, smiling. "Don't you know every fellow says that when the fever has first laid hold of him? What I asked you was where did you see this glorious divinity?"

"Where! why, at the Museum!" said Keith, loweringly, "painting a picture."

"Oh, I see. Don't get ruffled, old man," returned Egerton soothingly. "I see it's all right and beg your pardon, but you know some of the sweet angels that pierce our hearts are not always artists at the Museum, hence my perhaps doubts of this one in particular. Pray go on; I am all attention, believe me."

"She sat on for nearly three hours at her task, while I looked on furtively, leaving my own work untouched. She is experienced, too, in art."

"Do you mean to tell me that you sat looking on all that time?" asked his companion incredulously.

"Of course I did; she was a far more

beautiful study than anything in the gallery—the sweetest of faces, gentle and refined, the most bewitching little mouth you ever saw, and a golden braided head that surpasses even Clytie, your ideal of loveliness."

As he described the girl's beauty his features became radiant with the theme—his eyes glowed with love's fires, conjured by the magic of his own thoughts, and impressed his friend by the force of his vivid description.

"She must, indeed, be beautiful, Keith," said his friend, as he sipped his mulled claret; "but why didn't you follow her and find out where she lived?"

"That is what worries me. She slipped down as she was leaving the building. I saved her from a nasty fall, and before a word was scarcely passed a carriage dashed up, and the coachman jumped down, opened the door, and she was gone."

"But didn't she thank you for the service you had rendered her?"

"Oh, yes; she put her hand in mine, and told me how grateful she was, and bid me good-bye. There, now, you know all that passed."

"Well, all I can say, old fellow, is, that it is a pretty little adventure, quite a romance, and the only thing to be done is to visit the Museum again, when, of course, you will meet your fair unknown."

"But that is what is worrying me. I must go for six months' tour in Rome, at the end of which I have to return to be present at my brother's wedding."

"Ah, that slipped my mind. That is decidedly awkward; but you don't go for nearly a week."

"No; but I have to attend to so many things for the pater, you know. He is coming to town to-morrow."

"I'm sorry for you, Keith, for it seems that you and she will never meet again; but such being the case, take my advice—don't brood over it. You may depend upon it fate has never intended that you two should; so take my advice, banish her from your thoughts, and come out with me, and take a look into the Gaiety—there is sure to be some fun there to drive away dull care. We will have a bit of dinner at the club first, a cup of coffee, and leave thought behind."

In a very short time the two young men were bowling down Piccadilly into Pall Mall as fast as a hansom could go on the glassy roads.

The next day Sassie set out for her usual afternoon's amusement, and this time she did not linger to feed the swans. She hurried by, simply casting a glance at their beseeching attitudes as they arched their graceful necks and sent forth sundry shrill quacks as they watched their pretty almoner pass along, perfectly oblivious of their disappointment.

"He is sure to be there, I should think," she thought, as a crimson tide suffused her face. "Dear me!" this as she looked at her little jewelled watch, "it is now half-past two; there will be very little light left."

Was it the light that troubled her maiden heart? It must be confessed that a tall, manly figure, young and lithesome, yet strong, had something to do with her anxiety to reach her destination more than her picture.

She looked about as she entered the gallery to catch a glimpse of this man, whose voice and smile was as tender and gentle as a woman's.

But no sign was there of his presence, and with a little sigh she collected her materials and commenced her work, but not with the same energy she had been accustomed to feel before.

"Dear, oh, dear! how tiresome everything is to-day," she said, pettishly, as her brushes tumbled from her fingers. "The light, too, is wretched. I shall not stay here much longer. I know I shall only spoil my good effects."

And a grave, sad light came into the soft grey eyes, that changed like the lights and shades of an April sky. Hers was but a child's nature; she was quickly impressed with joy or

sorrow, and the sunlight faded from her beautiful face as she gave one last, long look around the chamber.

She had buoyed up her mind with the sweet thought of meeting this stranger again, to hear his voice, to look up into the poetical face, and express her thanks once more.

"He does not care to come," she thought, sadly. "He has forgotten it all by now, nasty stupid creature that I am"—this as a pearly tear dropped on her picture—"I daresay he is a very disagreeable young man when he is at home, after all." And then she smiled, as she had to wipe very carefully the little tear from—as if fate willed it—the eye of the girl she was painting. "Only fancy that falling on her eyelid; it looked just as if my sweet princess were crying."

There was nothing to do now but to pack up and go; and slowly and reluctantly she finished her arrangements, buttoned her gloves, and made her way again out, casting furtive peeps over her shoulder in faint hope of seeing her cavalier of the previous day.

But, alas! he never appeared, and she had to make her way home in anything but a happy frame of mind, for she had permitted her thoughts to wander away all the preceding night, and had weaved a delightful little romance, where he was the principal figure and actor.

On her way home the reflection that she should see him no more brought the tears to her bonnie eyes. All time seemed so black and drear.

What should she do to-morrow and the next day, and the next? How destitute of hope her life! She could paint her picture, and perhaps finish it, but it all seemed very cold and desolate.

"Stupid little goose!" she said to herself. "What mamma or Louie would say I don't know? They must never guess my folly; but I did fancy that he looked with more than a stranger's interest. Well—well! it only shows how dense we girls are."

It was a glorious morning, though Jack Frost had spread a dazzling carpet of white flakes, soft and feathery, in the shaded nooks and hollows in the park, where tramping feet, passing carriages, and equestrians did not sully its purity.

The Park was well attended this exhilarating morning by pretty girls wrapped in sables and furs of all descriptions, buxom matrons comfortably ensconced in their luxurious carriages, wrapped in velvets and costly furs; men, the very flower of the aristocracy, either riding or walking briskly, just stopping a second to recognize a friend, here and there facing the winter breeze, and being rewarded by a delightful, healthful tingling in the cheeks that brings a spirit of wholesome defiance of the elements.

There were but few fair equestrians, but Sassie was there on her favourite "Peggy," and cantered along, looking as fresh and sweet as the violets she wore at her throat that lay coyly hiding their heads below her snowy collar.

"That is she!" said Keith Glendive, excitedly, as he made his way to the railings, just in time to see the graceful figure flit away like a sunbeam on a cloudy day.

He stood gazing spellbound as she rode away, her habit flowing behind her, a young groom following at a distance.

"She will return, surely," he thought. And he was right, for in about ten minutes she came dashing along this time, and Keith's experienced eye saw that she had lost for the moment the control of her horse by the white, set face and tight rein she held with such tenacity.

On she came, the horse plunging and swerving with dilated nostrils, ears erect, as if it had been frightened.

Sassie sat immovable, with lips tightly compressed, determined to curb the animal, being a fearless horsewoman, and at last resorted to the use of her spur.

This last resource seemed to madden Peggy

and she reared up suddenly, and in another moment Sassie was unseated, her fair head dangling on the soft earth, one foot still in the stirrup, while the vicious creature was dragging her sweet young mistress in its wild career swiftly to eternity, while the bystanders stood as if paralyzed for a brief minute.

But Keith, though numbed with horror for the second, rushed through the crowd, and with the fleetness of a roe gained the race and seized the bridle with a grip of iron, at the same time disengaging Sassie's foot, by which time other assistance had arrived.

Again she was in the protecting arms of Keith Glendive, saved from deadly peril, the bare thought of which made her tremble as she lay with her golden hair dishevelled, just as it had fallen from her comb, that dreadful moment of horror when life seemed slipping away into impenetrable darkness.

Her blue veined lids quivered, and her lips tried to frame some reply to his entreaty as he whispered,—

"Tell me, are you hurt? I beseech you to answer me."

"No," she said, with quivering lips, "only shaken—frightened, believe me."

By this time they were surrounded by a crowd of curiosity-mongers; and her groom came bustling up, looking terribly alarmed.

"Go and fetch a cab," said Keith, authoritatively, to the poor fellow whose teeth chattered like castanets, for he feared he would get blamed by Lady Musgrave for not looking more carefully after his beautiful young mistress.

"I am better now, thank you," said Sassie, bravely, as she realized the unpleasant position, environed round with a motley group of gaping sight-seers; "indeed I am," she continued. "See, I can stand by myself," and she disengaged herself from his support to assure him.

"Let me pass, I know the lady," said a gentleman, making his way to the girl's side and putting his arm around her waist and lifting her like a child across to a carriage, followed by Keith and the groom.

"I am so grateful to you, but I cannot express all I mean," she said, tremulously, as she raised her pretty eyes wistfully into Keith's face.

"I am rewarded amply by seeing you are not injured," he replied, as he helped her friend, Lord Truman, to lift her into the carriage.

"Drive as fast as you can back," said his lordship to his coachman, impatiently, not looking too pleased at Sassie's evident interest in this handsome man, who so goodly riveted to the spot, his fine eyes bent with a gleaming expression of admiration, love, and tender concern upon the fair girl.

"I am very sorry to remind you that delay might prove dangerous to my friend, sir, therefore, excuse me saying more," said Lord Truman, abruptly.

"Thank you once more," as she waved her little hand in farewell, and sank back exhausted on the cushions.

"Gone again, my beautiful one, without leaving a trace to aid me in finding you! Will it ever be so? Are we only to meet when danger threatens you?" he murmured, as he walked listlessly in the direction of Albert Gate immersed in a sweet reverie. "Is it fate, kismet, or what, that has sent me to her rescue twice? Shall we meet the third time? Bah! that is impossible. I start to-morrow for home. What a lunatic I was not to follow the groom and question him! He would have told me the name and home of my sweet stranger. I wonder what that supercilious individual was to her? How deucedly uncivil he was to me! Surely, but there," and his eyes flashed resentfully; "he can be nothing to her—perish the thought. It would drive me mad to think even of anything so horrible. But why should I care? The sea will soon divide us, and then all will be a blank—hopeless, aimless, and eternal darkness. No, there is a ray of light left to my life yet. I will never rest night or

day till I have finished my beautiful one's picture. No earthly creature can deny me that happiness. She will live with me as long as I exist, my treasure. No woman, however fair, shall erase my ideal from my heart. Here is my comfort and soul's future joy—my own—my love for ever and ever."

Sassie soon regained her strength and spirits, making light of her accident, and even took Peggy's part, saying to Lady Musgrave, cheerily, as they talked the matter over,—

"Really, mother mine, poor Peggy was not to blame so very much. It was all through a nasty, mischievous butcher-boy who ran before her, snatching gaily."

"But Lord Truman said some young man was holding you in an insensible condition in his arms when he came to your rescue."

"I don't know what he calls coming to my rescue," she said, quickly. "I should have been dead but for that brave gentleman. Lord Truman came when the danger was over."

"Really, dear child, that is rather ungrateful of you to speak of his care and anxiety so coldly," returned her mother, with a little sigh.

"He did not save my life, mother dear. My gratitude is for the brave man that did," she said, hotly.

"But, my dear, poor Lord Truman did all that lay in his power at least, and the other showed, you must admit, very little interest in you whom he did so great a service in not making himself known, so that I might have thanked him and shown my everlasting gratitude to one who had rendered me the priceless boon of my loved child's life," Lady Musgrave replied, chidingly.

"Mamma is right," Sassie thought. "He has twice saved me from danger, but only as he would anyone whom he saw placed in the same circumstances. If it were not so, why has he never sought me in the place where he met me first?" but she said aloud,—

"I am very tired, mother, and do not feel quite strong, but, believe me, when I tell you I should either be maimed for life or lifeless had it not been for the courage and presence of mind of this nameless, but noble man."

Inwardly Sassie wished Lord Truman at the Antipodes rather than have come on the scene as he did that day.

"How dared he show such an air of proprietorship, and take me away from the man who had risked his life," she thought, angrily, as she sat impassively in her chamber, while her maid unrobed her for the night.

But as she put her little weary head on her dainty-frilled pillow, and drew the rosy, silk-down coverlet up to her snowy throat, sweet thoughts chased away the darkness, for something told her this demi-god whom she had set up as an idol in her innocent maiden heart would meet her again and yet again, and her pure soul took flight in bright and happy dreams of bliss.

"Sleep on, sweet maid, nor sigh to break
The spell that binds thy brain,
Nor struggle from thy trance, to wake
To life's impending pain;
Who wakes to love, awake, but knows
Love is a dream without repose."

CHAPTER III.

LOVE'S DREAM.

"Yes, dear child, it is inevitable, so Doctor Norman says. These east winds are quite too dreadful."

"Are you sure you are not keeping anything back, mother?" said Sassie, anxiously. "Shall I summon Lonie back from Paris to go with us?"

"Certainly not, love. There is no reason why her enjoyment should be curtailed. I assure you there is nothing serious, simply one lung a little weak, which a warm climate for a month or two will put straight; and a change will do you good, too, for you have lost not only your roses, but your spirits. You certainly are not so bright and gay as you

were. I fear that fall from Peggy shook you more than you have confessed."

Sassie averted her face from the earnest eyes that were trying to probe the truth from her mobile, expressive countenance, that had been as easy to read as an open book hitherto.

"Indeed, I am as well and hearty as—what shall I say, mother mine—well, a milkmaid," she said, gaily; but communed thus as she sat in the cosy morning room opposite her affectionate mother,—

"How thoroughly ungrateful and wicked I must be to regret dear mother's illness principally because it will take me away from him! Why cannot I thrust all such thoughts and memories from my foolish heart as unworthy, nay, sinful?"

And she clasped her little hands in silent prayer, as she noted the extreme delicacy of Lady Musgrave's gentle face, and murmured,—

"Oh, my Father, who has been to me my strength and guide ever since I lost my earthly one, teach me submission, and concentrate my love and obedience to my darling mother. Make me less thoughtful of this stranger, and more dutiful to her who needs my every care and affection!"

And, as if in answer to her supplication, a still, small voice seemed to ring in her ear,—

"Be of good faith. Do thy duty. Cast off the fetters of self-struggle out of your absorbing fancies, which are enchainning you, body and soul, and be free. Devote your energies to the sacrificing mother, who now requires all your heart's affections."

Comfort and peace sustained her now that she was resolved to put aside the past and live for the future.

"Is this not lovely, Sassie?" exclaimed Lady Musgrave, as they drove past the grand hills of Var in the rumbling vehicles used in Italy by travellers.

It was rather difficult for Sassie or her mother to hear each other speak, what with the perpetual jingling of the harness bells, the rumbling noise of the heavy wheels, coupled with the driver's shouting, calling, whistling, shrieking, singing, with the vain idea of coaxing his cattle.

But the two fair travellers were not daunted at this primitive style of locomotion, they being too interested in the glorious glowing sunset that was tipping the hills with hues of lilac and richest purple.

"It is grand, mother," replied Sassie, with awe. "We are nearing Nice now. See! Why here are orange trees positively laden with fruit, and real roses. This is, indeed, a paradise!"

"Yes, it is lovely, child," assented her mother. "A perfect fairyland. I feel better already, and you have almost recovered your usual gaiety."

Certainly the scene was lovely in the extreme that greeted the delighted eyes of the pair who had come straight from dull, bleak England and its bitter keen east winds.

Nice lay before them, its hills and peaks clothed with olive and cypress, its dazzling white houses dotted here and there, and the violet blue Mediterranean stretched calmly at their feet.

Sassie felt its calm, placid beauty. Her artist soul was enraptured at the grandness of the whole classical landscape; and her impulsive heart throbbled with innocent joy as she murmured,—

"Forgetfulness will sure to come to me in this paradise, where there is so much compensation and loveliness."

And yet she heaved a little sigh as she thought how perfect would her happiness have been had he been there to share it—her brave deliverer.

Days passed now with Sassie in one whirl of pleasurable surprises and excitement; everything was so novel and fresh, and she passed in and out of the swart groups of peasants and picturesque ragged beggars, sometimes dropping into their grimy hands money, and receiving in exchange a volley of blessings

enough to have wafted a big sinner to Heaven had they been really sincere.

Sassie had found comfort at last. Here eyes had regained their old sweet, mischievous expression, and her mouth was constantly wreathed in smiles, showing the bewitching dimples to perfection.

The beautiful dazzling South had worked wonders for both Sassie and her mother, and she felt protecting, almost Divine, love steal into her young heart, for this fragile dear one, like healing dew, and it strengthened and purified her whole nature.

"I beg your pardon, you are the lady that—" said a deep thrilling voice, which caused Sassie to reel and catch hold of a rail for support, for one brief moment; the next her hand was clasping his as she said, while burning blushes stole over her face and brow, crimsoning even the tiny shell ears,—

"You saved me, two months ago from a dreadful fate, one that makes me shudder to think of, for it might have been worse than death."

He retained the little hand, and gazed long and earnestly on the face that had haunted his dreams by night, and forced its rare beauties upon him to the exclusion of everything, human, and divine, by day.

"I should have been a savage, a criminal if I had not dared for more than that; but do not dwell on the most torturing moment of my life. Let me tell you how happy I am to meet you again," he said, fervently, drinking in, with all a lover's delight her timid grace as she stood trembling with ecstatic emotion and unstudied grace—a veritable Galatea before Pygmalion, her sculptor, awakened to life by the magic wand of love by her master; for it was dawning on her slowly, but surely, that existence would be valueless and desolate if this stately demigod, who was looking down with eyes that literally blazed with a lurid fire that thrilled through her veins, and make her stand meekly as a captive, with shy, downcast eyes, that dared not meet his earnest gaze, should their lives not be linked together by Love's golden chains.

"But would you have perilled your life for anyone?" she said, naively, "I mean any damsel in distress."

"Yes, I must plead guilty to that count," he replied, laughing gaily. "It would never occur to me there was danger when a lady's life hung in the balance. Fear and I are strangers; I never remember the feeling."

"Why you are like Lord Nelson," she said softly, "who was lost in the woods when a little child, and was asked by his grandmama if he did not feel frightened, and replied, what is fear?"

"You admire our brave naval hero," he returned, "but I fall far short of that illustrious sailor, I'm afraid."

"Not so, I think you very brave," she said, with sweet maidenly confusion, "indeed I do."

"You are an angel," he whispered softly, as he pressed her little gloved hand to his lips gallantly, which brought a very crimson tide to her face and neck, even to her ears.

What a veritable paradise this picture-gallery was now to Sassie as she strolled by her hero's side, drinking in his every word, and treasuring, like a miser would his gold, each passionate gesture and expression.

Fortunately there were but two or three students busily engaged with their art, so the young couple were free to converse, and they certainly made great use of their time.

The finest specimens of the great painters were discussed and admired in turn, and Sassie had now lost all her shyness, and chatted and laughed joyously as Glendive recounted several amusing adventures, as if they had known each other for years.

"Have you finished the picture you were engaged upon at South Kensington?" he asked.

"Yes, she faltered, looking fairly puzzled.

"But how did you know I was painting a picture?"

"Ah, I see you little guessed that I was admiring the sweet artist in my corner by

Landseer's picture of the 'Chief Mourner,' or that I followed you downstairs that frosty night, and—"

"Saved me from a nasty tumble. In fact, played the part of the good fairy," she added. "But what took you to the Museum?" this archly.

"The same errand as yourself," he replied, enjoying her perplexity.

"Then you are a painter too, and was, perhaps, laughing at my poor attempts. Oh, it's quite too bad of you," she replied, looking so comically rueful that he burst out into a bright musical laugh, which infected Sassie as well, and the grand old galleries caught its joyousness, and the echoes awoke the stillness, causing the busy students to look round with amazement at the tall, graceful English girl and her handsome companion with interest and curiosity.

"They are a picture in themselves, the bonniest couple I ever saw; engaged lovers, I suppose," muttered an old gentleman who had been wandering about. "They do my eyes more good than the pictures. Ah, me! youth is the time for happiness and bliss."

"You have not answered my question," he said.

"About my stupid dab? Well, it is finished; but there, do not think about it, for I am quite ashamed of my work when I look round these walls and see these grand conceptions of the great masters of old."

"But these all had a beginning," he said, "as is proved by their earliest works, which were very crude, much more so than that one you were painting."

"Did you it see sufficiently to judge its merits? Oh dear! oh dear! if I had but known you were criticising my poor picture I should have—"

"Simply given me permission to take a nearer view, and perhaps asked my opinion as a brother artist, and probably my assistance;" this with a merry twinkle in his eyes. "Shall I give my opinion now?"

"Yes, please, if you think it worth a second thought," she replied.

"You will promise me not to feel hurt, then, if I comply?"

"Yes, I promise," she said, archly.

"Well then, I will commence. You painted your lights on a cloudy morning to begin with, and your shades were a little too pronounced, yet there was much genius and even power in the picture that tells me you have the true poet's soul, which will burst forth as you go on steadily up the hill working diligently, always remembering that to attain your goal that constant practice makes perfect. Have I discouraged you?" this with a smile as tender as a woman's.

"No, I am grateful," she replied, looking trustfully up into his fine expressive eyes. "I like your censure as well as your praise; it is that which makes the praise valuable, and I shall treasure your advice and try to do better. Will you show me some of your pictures? I should so much like to see them."

"You shall be gratified if you will come to my studio any morning before the end of the week."

"Why must it be before the end of the week?" this with a little quiver in her voice, as something told her he was about to leave Italy.

"Because I have to return to Rome to finish a work that is intended for a wedding present, and must be ready by May."

"Is it for your marriage?" she asked, tremulously.

"No, oh! no. It is a surprise for my brother's bride that is to be."

A little sigh of relief escaped her, as they now turned to leave the building.

"When shall I come? Would to-morrow suit you?"

"To-morrow—every day in the week," he replied, earnestly, "is yours. I will wait and watch, oh, so anxiously, for your coming!"

Your sweet presence will lighten the prosy painter's den, and convert it into an Eden."

How precious were his loving words to Sassie—words that pierced her fresh young heart with love's sweet ecstatic fire. All the romance of her nature was aroused, by his soft, pleading eyes and fascinating manner, that told her as plain as language itself that he loved her and had done so from the moment he saw her—that dull, grey winter afternoon, with the deepening shadows of twilight slanting upon the little tarnished head, making her eyes to dance with a strange but dazzling sparkle, lighting up her whole face as if by magic.

"How beautiful she is!" he thought, as he gazed upon her radiant face. "A very Hebe! Will the day ever come when I can claim this lovely child of my dreams, my twin soul, my divinity?"

They had now reached a handsome building, where he stopped, saying—

"That is where I am staying. I will meet you anywhere you name, and conduct you to this place, only tell me what hour I may expect you."

"To-morrow at the same time and place as you met me to-day," she said.

"Until then good-bye," he replied, as he took the trembling little hand in his brown palm, and grasped it fervently, passionately; and as she turned away she only saw his grave honest eyes looking sad and wistful at their parting, and she wished she could have comforted him in some way, and she felt he was following her with those soul-speaking eyes, and a longing possessed her to turn round and see him once more.

But she walked on bravely, past the little dirty children who would persist in begging for halfpence, bobbing and curtsying like little mandarins, and they were more than successful; for Sassie was so happy that in her blissful mood she emptied her purse among the little creatures, making them shriek with delight as they clamoured about her, and fought and struggled to obtain the largest share of the coins.

(To be continued.)

THE FIRST MEERSCHAUM PIPE.—In 1723 there lived in Pesh, the capital of Hungary, Karol Kowates, a shoemaker, whose ingenuity in cutting and carving on wood, etc., brought him into contact with Count Andrassy, with whom he became a favourite. The count, on his return from a mission to Turkey, brought with him a piece of whitish clay, which had been presented to him as a curiosity on account of its extraordinary light specific gravity. It struck the shoemaker that, being porous, it must be well adapted for pipes, as it would absorb the nicotine. The experiment was tried, and Karol cut a pipe for the count and one for himself. But in the pursuit of his trade he could not keep his hands clean, and many a piece of shoemaker's wax became attached to the pipe. The clay, however, instead of assuming a dirty appearance when Karol wiped it off, received wherever the wax had adhered to it a clearer brown polish, instead of the dull white it previously had. Attributing this change in the tint to its proper source, he waxed the whole surface, and, polishing the pipe again, smoked it, and noticed how admirably and beautifully it coloured, also how much more sweetly the pipe smoked after being waxed. Other noblemen hearing of the wonderful properties of this singular species of clay, imported it in considerable quantities for the manufacture of pipes. The natural scarcity of this much-esteemed article, and the great cost of importation in those days of limited facilities for transportation, rendered its use exclusively confined to the richest European noblemen until 1830, when it became a more general article of trade. The first meerschaum pipe made by Karol Kowates has been preserved in the museum of Pesh.

WHICH WAS THE HEIRESS?

—o—

CHAPTER XVIII.

GRACE did not close her eyes that night until she had written a letter to Mr. Rainsforth, in London, apprising him of the startling reappearance of Diana, whom they had hoped and believed dead. She was filled with consternation at the turn affairs had taken. Almost a year had passed away in perfect security and tranquil enjoyment of the good fortune of which she had cheated Reginald Rainsforth's daughter—now it seemed to her as if retribution stared her in the face. There was something chill and foreboding in the thought that Diana Rainsforth was at that moment sleeping calmly beneath her own grandfather's roof, secure in the love and protection of such people as Lady Melville and Sir Harold Meredith—people, as Grace bitterly reflected to herself, who had never looked upon her anything but coldly, despite all her wheedling efforts to gain their favour and win their hearts.

Having stayed up late to finish her letter Grace slept even later than usual the next morning and breakfasted in her own room.

"I will wear my dress of pale-blue nun's veiling to-day," she said to the maid, "and turquoise ornaments. Arrange my hair very carefully. Are the guests up yet?"

"Yes, my lady, and have been out on the terrace half-an-hour," said the maid.

Grace grew very impatient at that. She could scarcely wait for her toilet to be completed before she seized her becoming rose-coloured parasol and tripped out upon the terrace.

The family and the guests were all there before her. Mrs. Delamere, a lovely, delicate, fair-haired woman, sat upon a rustic seat with Lady Melville, asking her about her tour. Sir Harold and Mr. Delamere stood a little apart, conversing earnestly. The old Earl was taking his leisurely morning walk by Diana's side—Diana, as bright and smiling as the summer morning, in a pretty, simple white lawn, with a scarlet rose in her belt, and a wide-brimmed, white chip hat, garlanded with blush-roses, shading her sparkling, piquant face. Grace went up to them.

"Good-morning grandpapa—good morning, Diana," she said.

"My dear, you are a lazy girl," the Earl cried, in excellent spirits. "Your young friend here has been up an hour, listening to the birds singing."

Grace flushed. She knew that her grandfather was prejudiced in favour of early rising. But she said to Diana, with a gentle smile:

"It is your fault, Diana, that I am later than usual this morning. I could not sleep, when I first retired last night, for thinking of the great surprise and pleasure your visit had given me. Waverley Hall is a charming place, and I have devised some delightful plans for our mutual pleasure while you remain with us."

"Thank you," said Diana, with her sweet, bright smile.

The Earl smiled graciously on his granddaughter. He was pleased at her cordiality to the beautiful young visitor, to whom he had taken an unaccountable fancy. Others noticed that he was charmed with her. It did not seem strange to him. He thought he liked her, simply because she had been brought up with Grace, his granddaughter. He did not consider the fact that he really despised Mr. Rainsforth, who loved Grace so well, and who had reared her much better than he did his own child.

"The first thing I have thought of," went on Grace quickly, "is to take you for a row on the lake. I remember you always loved to go on the water. This will delight you. The lake is so pretty, with the willows fringing its banks, and the water-lilies on its breast. You may see it shining through the trees yonder."

"It is beautiful," said Diana, turning her

dark eyes on the silvery sheet of water. "I think I should enjoy a row very much."

"Let us go, then," smiled Grace. "Grandpapa, will you come with us, or will you excuse me for carrying dear little Diana off?"

"Dear little Diana," smiled at the honeyed speech. She had grown half a head taller than Grace in the year of their separation.

"I will sit down with Lady Melville," said the Earl, indulgently. "I am quite sure you two are dying to get together and talk over your girlish secrets."

The blonde and brunette walked away, and Arthur Delamere watched them with secret longing.

"May I come with you?" he asked, and Grace threw him a bright, dazzling, coquettish smile over her shoulder.

"No," she replied, "I will not let you go to-day to punish you for not bringing me the water-lilies yesterday."

"At least we can follow after them, and admire their beauty from a distance," said Sir Harold, laughing; "let us walk in the park, Arthur."

They sauntered leisurely on, and Grace did not notice that they were coming.

"Dear Arthur!" she said to Diana, with a pretty air of shyness. "He is never happy unless he is following me like my own shadow, but yesterday he was down at the lake and forgot to bring me some lilies, so, to punish the handsome fellow, he shall not come with me to-day. I intend to bestow my whole time on you, my dear, undisturbed by his irrepressible love-making."

"Does Mr. Delamere live at Waverley Hall?" asked Diana, quietly.

"Yes," said Grace, unhesitatingly. "He goes up to London often—all young men of fashion do, you know—but his home is with us. He will inherit the title after my grandfather. Waverley Hall will belong to him, then."

"It is a beautiful home. I should think you would be sorry to leave it when that time comes," said Diana, innocently.

Grace tossed her head.

"Grandpapa's death will make no difference as to my going or staying," she laughed. "Waverley Hall will be my home always. I shall stay here, then, with Arthur."

Diana turned her large dark eyes on the flushed, triumphant face of the fair dissembler.

"Are you engaged to him?" she asked, with her pretty straightforwardness.

"Just as good," answered Grace, coolly.

"Arthur has not formally proposed for me yet, but we understand each other. You see, Arthur will inherit the title, but my grandfather's fortune comes to me. All the family, including Arthur himself, desire that we should marry each other."

"And you?" asked Diana, curiously.

"Oh! I am quite willing. He is the handsomest man I know, and then, poor fellow, so much in love! It makes him appear quite shy and awkward. I declare! Diana, are you engaged to Sir Harold?"

The red blood flashed up into Diana's olive cheek.

"No, I am not," she replied. "I never dreamed of such a thing! Why do you ask me, Grace?"

"Oh, no matter. I fancied so. He looked at you as if you belonged to him. And Arthur thinks so, I am sure. He told me so, and said that if it were true it would be a splendid match for a girl in your position. Oh! here we are at the lake, darling. This is my boat, with the golden letters and the blue satin cushions. Is it not lovely? Jump in, Diana. We shall have a splendid row, and bring back a bunch of water-lilies. I will do the rowing. You shall fold your hands and dream."

They made a lovely picture in the dainty little boat—the fair blonde and the tawny-eyed brunette. Sir Harold and Mr. Delamere lingered, unobserved beneath the trees, watching them with delight. Lady Grace bent to the oars, her round cheeks flushed with exercise, her lips curved with a charming smile

as she talked to Diana, who sat very still, her white hands loosely folded over a water-lily in her lap, whose rich dark, glistening green leaves looked lovely against the background of her white dress and the whiter flower.

Diana did not look quite so careless and happy as Lady Grace. The ink fringe of her lashes drooped low upon her cheek, and her crimson lips were set in a grave little line.

Sir Harold and Arthur Delamere lingered near the lake, watching the two lovely girls, and listening to the soft, musical ripple of words and laughter that the summer breeze wafted to them across the water.

Arthur did not have much to say. He had asked Sir Harold to tell him how he had found Diana, and the baronet had only laughed, and said that it was Diana's own secret, and he could not tell him now, but perhaps she would tell him herself some time.

The baronet was disposed to be very chatty and agreeable, but Arthur was moody and taciturn. All his thoughts were centred on the dark-eyed girl in the boat with Grace.

While the baronet was looking at the beautiful sportive deer bounding beneath the trees, Arthur went nearer and parted the willows that fringed the lake to look at the girls. He did not wish that they should see him, but he could not resist the temptation of gazing at the beautiful girl who had saved his life and treated him so scornfully afterwards. He wondered how he could ever have talked about her so rudely as he did the first time he saw her.

How quickly his capricious, fault-finding mood had changed to reverential admiration and love when she had rescued him at such terrible and imminent danger to herself, even while she despised him. And Sir Harold, who had recognized her worth at the very beginning, had won her—he felt almost sure of that.

What a lovely picture she made as he gazed upon her through the parted willows! Grace had stopped, and was waiting while she gathered a bunch of water-lilies. Diana was leaning forward towards a green bed of leaves, plucking the white flowers, while a smile of pleasure curved her scarlet lips. Grace was talking and laughing, but he could not hear what she said. They were out in the middle of the lake. On one side the water was shallow, and the lilies grew luxuriantly; on the other side, just beyond the little boat, it was deep and dangerous.

Suddenly, as Arthur gazed, he saw Grace take up the oars with a swift movement, and the little boat spun around with dangerous rapidity. Diana leaning forward and taken by surprise, lost her balance. She threw up her hands in a vain effort to steady herself—a minute later she was struggling in the deep water.

The baronet heard a scream among the willows that he never forgot to his dying day—it was so full of anguish. He plunged forward, and when he reached the bank he saw Arthur's coat and hat on the ground, and Arthur himself swimming with quick, desperate strokes towards the middle of the lake.

The baronet did not comprehend what had occurred at first, but when he looked across the lake and saw Grace sitting in the boat alone, a terrible fear convulsed his heart. He looked beyond, and saw a little dark head held desperately above the water, and white arms reached out an instant to clutch the edge of the boat. But the little boat shot away swiftly out of her reach as Grace impelled the oars with an unflinching hand, though her face was deathly white with horror. She had heard Arthur's cry of alarm and anguish, and witnessed his frantic plunge into the water, and now she steered directly before him, and called out in an imploring tone:

"Come into my boat, Arthur. Poor Diana has fallen out, and is drowned, and you will be, too, if you don't take care!"

Sir Harold saw Arthur put out one strong, white, indignant hand, and push the fairy little boat from him with such force that it bounded back like a feather. Then he swam past it swiftly towards the spot where at that very

instant the dark head and white arms had gone down beneath the water. Grace clutched her oars tightly and rowed to the shore, where Sir Harold without any ceremony lifted her out of the boat and sprang in himself. Then he rowed desperately to his friend's assistance.

He was just in time. Arthur had dived down far below the water, and had come up with the beloved form clasped in his arms. But his strength was almost spent.

Sir Harold drew them into the boat with some difficulty and rowed back to the shore, where Grace crouched, weeping and terror-stricken, among the willows.

CHAPTER XIX.

SIR HAROLD and Arthur Delamere sprang out of the boat and lifted Diana's unconscious form reverently, laying her down upon the soft, green grass. Grace crept nearer and looked down upon the white face and closed eyes.

"Is she dead?" she asked, half fearfully.

"I cannot tell," said Sir Harold, briefly, "I wish you would go up to the hall, Lady Grace, and tell my sister and Mrs. Delamere to come down and bring restoratives."

He was kneeling on the grass, chafing the cold, white hands tenderly as he spoke, and Arthur Delamere had thrown himself upon the ground like one dazed with grief. But though he had bidden her go, Grace lingered as though she had not heard him.

"I do not see how Diana could have been so careless, falling into the water that way," she said. "She was gathering some water-lilies, and she must have leaned too far out, I think, for the first thing I knew she was out into the water. I tried to save her, but I could not, and then I rowed out to Mr. Delamere when I saw him in the lake, too, thinking I might help him."

Arthur lifted his bowed head from the grass and looked at her. She shrank beneath the fiery scorn and anger of that look.

"Grace," he broke out, wrathfully, "do not perjure yourself. I was looking through the willows and I saw it all. She was leaning far out, and you whirled the boat around like a flash into the deep water before she could regain her balance. I believe, before Heaven, that it was intentionally done, and if Diana Rainsforth is dead I will denounce you as her murderer!"

Grace fell upon her knees, her jewelled hands clasped together, her face transformed by terror.

"Oh, Mr. Delamere," she wailed, "how can you say such cruel things? I swear to you it was an accident! Why should I have tried to drown Diana, the sweet little girl with whom I was reared, and whom I loved like a sister? You do not know what you are saying. Take back your unkind words, and, for Heaven's sake, do not breathe such a suspicion against me to any one else."

Her tears, her terror, her consummate acting disarmed Arthur's suspicious of their keenest edge. He began to think that, after all, as she said, it might have been an accident.

"Perhaps I was wrong, Grace," he said, under the influence of the doubt. "If I am I beg your pardon. But why did you row away so fast, and leave the poor girl to her fate?"

"I do not know. I was beside myself with terror, I suppose," Grace replied, with a shudder. "I did not feel so frightened at first. I knew that Diana used to be an accomplished swimmer, and I thought she could save herself. But when I saw her sinking I was so horrified I did not know what was best to be done."

The excuse seemed so plausible that Arthur did not know what to say. Sir Harold said not a word. Pale and grave, he bent over Diana, employing what remedies seemed best until help arrived. Then they carried her up to the house. After a time she came to herself again, but she was frightened and nervous. She did not seem like the brave little girl she usually was. She turned with a moan and shiver from Grace's kisses and tears, and clung to Lady Melville.

There were two days when she did not leave her room. No one saw her but Mrs. Delamere and Sir Harold's sister. They said that her nervous system had sustained such a shock from her accident that she could bear nothing. A bed was made for her in Lady Melville's dressing-room, where she could tend her with her own hands night and day.

Those two days went wearily at Waverley Hall. Lady Melville's door was besieged by anxious messengers from the Earl and Sir Harold Meredith. Arthur Delamere sent her a bouquet of roses. Grace wept because they would not admit her into the room.

But on the third evening Diana came down to dinner. She was nervous still. She trembled when Grace kissed her, and told her how sorry she was for her accident. She drew a soft white shawl about her shoulders, as if she were cold, and went and sat down in a quiet corner, where she was joined by the Earl, who expressed his great delight at her recovery.

After dinner she stepped out on the low balcony to look at the fair, tranquil landscape under the full light of the moon. Arthur Delamere was there smoking a cigar, which he threw away as she came up to him with that quaint straightforwardness which he had once thought brusque and uncultivated, but which appeared so natural and charming now.

"Mr. Delamere," she said, in her clear, sweet voice. "Sir Harold has told me that you saved my life that day when I fell into the lake."

He looked at the bright, beautiful face. The unconscious tenderness with which she said "Sir Harold" charmed him.

"I only drew you out of the water," he replied, moodily. "If Sir Harold had not come up with the boat just as I was on the point of succumbing to a sudden faintness, I do not think either of us would ever have come out of the lake alive."

She shrank a little at the carelessness of his tone and manner, but still said bravely:

"Then I have all the more reason to thank you for saving my life, since the attempt very nearly involved the sacrifice of your own."

Some impulse prompted him to say, in a gentler tone:

"You owe me no thanks, Miss Rainsforth. Do you remember when you saved my life in Scotland?"

"Yes," she answered; and he saw her tremble slightly. "I do not think I can ever forget that dreadful flood, Mr. Delamere."

"It was a brave and noble thing for a slight girl to do," he said; "and just before that I had spoken of you rudely and discourteously. Do you remember what you said to me when I wanted to thank you for saving the life that is so precious to my widowed mother?"

In the soft and brilliant moonlight he fancied he saw the faint flush deepen to crimson on her cheeks.

"Yes, I remember," she said, "I told you it was my revenge for your discourtesy."

"It was a noble revenge," he said; "and now I might tell you that I saved your life the other day as a noble revenge upon you for a wrong you had done to me."

The dark eyes flashed wide open. He could see how dark, how soft, how starry-bright they were as the thick, curling lashes fluttered upward in blank surprise.

"A wrong!" she cried. "Indeed you are mistaken. What have I done?"

"You spoiled my life, that is all you have done, Diana!" he cried out bitterly. "You saved me from that terrible death that day, and my whole heart went out to you, child as you were! Then that night when I asked you to marry me, you refused me so scornfully that the wound has never ceased to pain my heart. You have wronged me in that, you would not believe in my love. At least, you might have refused me kindly, without throwing doubt upon my truth. It is your scorn I have to complain of, Diana. No—do not interrupt me, dear—you do not need to tell me it is too late to bring up the old issues now."

I realize it in all its bitter truth. But, Diana, I am miserable without you; since we cannot be more, let us at least be friends."

"He means that he is to marry Grace," thought Diana, as the passionate words came to an abrupt close; then she answered in a voice that faltered ever so slightly:

"I am very sorry you have felt my refusal so much, Mr. Delamere. I think I have misjudged you a great deal, owing to my early pique against you. If you can forgive me for my injustice, I am quite willing to be your friend."

"Give me that rose in your hair, as a pledge of our friendship," he said, eagerly, and he took the hand that held it out to him and pressed it to his lips, saying gravely:

"There is only one thing that could make me happier than your friendship, Diana, and that would be your love."

"You must not say such things, Mr. Delamere," she said quickly, thinking of Lady Grace.

"I know it," he said, thinking of Sir Harold. "you must forgive me, little Diana. But you do not know how sweet it is to have you for my friend, even. Hitherto I have always thought that you despised me."

"Indeed, I do not," she answered, frankly. "I know now that you are both brave and true. I confess I was angry at you until that night when you carried me out of the burning cottage. I knew then that I had been mistaken in my estimate of you, and I began to like you—"

She stopped suddenly, with a confused consciousness that she was confiding too much to Grace's betrothed. He looked at her, half-maddened by the dark and sparkling beauty to which the soft yet brilliant moonlight lent a subtle charm.

"Ah! Diana," he cried, "you do not know how bitter it is to love in vain. In all the world there is no pain like it."

"If you talk to me like that I shall have to go in," she said, gently; "you must remember we are only friends."

Yet her own heart was throbbing quick and fast, with the knowledge that Arthur Delamere, the proud, exclusive, fastidious aristocrat, really loved her. She had heard Lady Melville say that he was considered a great catch, and that there were some beautiful and titled young ladies who would give their eyes for him. The feeling that came to her at this declaration of love for her was almost allied to pain, it was so full of subtle rapture.

"You must forgive me," he said, almost humbly. "You will have to forgive me for a great many impulsive things, Diana—friends often have to do that for each other, don't they?"

"I—suppose so," Diana said, rather vaguely; then she looked away from him at the fair, quiet landscape smiling beneath the soft rays of the moon. "I did not know you were here when I came out," she added; "I wanted to look at the scenery."

"Do you admire our scenery?" he asked, seeing that she was anxious to turn the conversation from its dangerous personal drift to the safe ground of generalities.

"Yes," she said, "I like it. It is calm, and sweet, and peaceful. It rests one to look at it. It is not grand, majestic, and awe-inspiring, like the scenes among which I was raised. No greater contrast could be imagined than this gentle, tranquil, lovely scenery around Waverley Hall, and the mountains and terrible grandeur of the Highlands. This awakens altogether different sentiments in the mind."

"This gentle landscape is attuned to love," said Arthur, speaking out the thought in his mind. "It is so beautiful and tender with the misty veil of moonlight spread over it. Do you smell the roses in the garden? The air is heavy with their fragrance. And listen, Diana! there is the nightingale singing to the flowers. Did you ever hear anything so heavenly sweet?"

She did not answer—she was holding her

breath to listen to the divinely tender strain. "It was as sad as earth, as sweet as heaven."

"Tis the merry nightingale
That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates,
With fast, thick warble, his delicious notes,
As he were fearful that an April night
Would be too short for him to utter forth
His love-chant, and disburden his full soul
Of all its music."

The romance and poetry of the summer night, and the near proximity of her lover, stole into Diana's heart, touching it as it had never been touched before. How strange and sweet it seemed to have Arthur Delamere for her friend. Once she had disdained him with a pretty, imperious disdain. She had thought him a weak, white-handed, shallow-brained fop. Now she knew him better. Had he not saved her life twice? She was proud to call him her friend. She had never had such a winning attractive friend as Arthur Delamere, and she had never dreamed how sweet such a friendship could be. Her heart still thrilled with the memory of the kiss he had pressed upon her hand when she had given him the flower she wore in her hair.

As she stood thus wrapped in tender musings over the friendship that was really nothing but love in disguise, she looked as lovely as a dream, with that tender light upon her sweet, spirited face.

Arthur felt as if he could have gazed upon her for ever, but his dreamy enjoyment was rudely broken by a sudden footstep and voice that fell upon his ear discordantly.

"Oh, here she is, the shy little runaway, mooning on the balcony with Mr. Delamere! I did not know you were such a flirt, Diana. Come into the house. Your papa has come from London, and is just dying to see you!"

Diana and Arthur turned round, and saw Grace looking at them with an expression of rage but ill-disguised upon her fair face. They followed her into the drawing-room, where Mr. Rainsforth stood waiting in apparent affectionate impatience for his daughter.

CHAPTER XX.

GRACE'S letter had so fully prepared and forearmed Mr. Rainsforth that he manifested no more than a proper modicum of surprise at the startling reappearance of the girl whom he had hoped and believed to be dead. He kissed Diana with just the proper amount of paternal affection, told her how glad he was to have her restored to his arms, and thanked Sir Harold and his sister for bringing her home.

"My dear," he said, drawing his perfumed handkerchief across his eyes to dry an invisible tear, "the joy of this meeting has quite overcome me. Sit down now beside me, and let me hear the story of your adventures when you ran away that night in the delirium of your fever. Where did you go, and what kind and benevolent friends did you meet?"

Diana had remained perfectly calm and composed under the torrent of words and caresses, manifesting no emotion of any kind whatever, but she answered now with visible coldness and constraint:

"I went a long distance, sir, and met with the kindest and truest friend in the world. But the story is a long one, and I am not strong enough to relate it now. If you please, we will defer it until some other time."

He was burning with impatience to hear it, but he knew it would not be of the least use to urge Diana. Under her calm, unnaturally composed deportment he knew there was alumbering a volcanic fire of passion and resentment, that he feared to provoke into a destructive blaze. He remembered their last night together when he had cruelly abused and maltreated her, leaving her like one dead upon the hard floor where he had rudely thrown her.

The memory of that night was smouldering in Diana's passionate heart this moment. He knew it, though the delicate scarlet lips were set in a calm and quiet line, and the thick dark fringe of her lashes swept low upon the faultless oval of her cheek. He was filled with secret dread at her presence in England,

and most especially under the Earl's roof. Why had the baronet and his proud sister, one of the proudest ladies in all England, brought her to England, and seemed so deeply interested in her? Did they know anything? If not, did they suspect anything. Outwardly pleased and affable, he was inwardly racked, with suspense and terror.

At the midnight hour when the old hall was locked in silence and repose, and the moon had gone down, he stole out to a private interview with Grace in a lonely little summer-house at the edge of the park. She came to meet him clothed in a long, disguising cloak and hood, from which her fair face gleamed ghastly white in the darkness.

"Is it not perfectly dreadful?" she said to him, in a low and agitated voice, as they sat down side by side on a rustic seat. "What will you do now?"

Mr. Rainsforth smothered a terrible oath between his lips.

"I will rid myself of the infernal millstone somehow, you may be sure of that, Grace," he said.

"Whatever you do must be done quickly and cautiously, then," she replied, "for I believe that they suspect something. They guard Diana as carefully as if she were some precious jewel. Tuesday I took her out boating on the lake, and adroitly tumbled her into the deep water. I managed it all so cleverly that she must certainly have been drowned, but that Arthur Delamere was lurking near, unseen by me, and swam to her rescue. He had seen the whole thing, and half suspected me. But I braved it out so cleverly that I staggered his belief."

"I suppose he has not come into the Earl's wish yet?" Mr. Rainsforth asked, anxiously.

"And never will," said the girl, with impatient wrath. "He is in love with Diana."

"So I imagined," gloomily; "but of course the Earl would never give his consent."

"Arthur can afford to do without it. The Earl has no power to coerce him," Grace said, shortly. "But I do not apprehend that Arthur would have any trouble in that direction. You must have noticed to-night that the Earl is charmed with Diana."

"Yes, I saw it all; but it must be nipped in the bud. If nothing else betrayed us, the girl's own face is a living protest against the fraud we have attempted. She actually remembers the Earl."

"Do not say attempted," Grace said, nervously. "We have carried it out successfully. No one dreamed of an imposture. But of one thing I am certain—she cannot remain here. She shall not! You must take her away!"

"I intend to do so, and that right speedily," said Mr. Rainsforth; "but"—a little nervously—"do you think there can be any doubt of her going with me? Would she refuse to leave these people? You know she is quite capable of rebellion."

"It is quite possible she would refuse. She is fond of Lady Melville, and would not like to leave her. I should like to know what the bond is between those two. I am a little afraid of their intimacy. Whatever it means you must take her away. If she refuses to go assert your authority. Who could prevent you? She belongs to you. Who could refuse a man the custody of his own child?"

"You are right, Grace. No one could do it. I will persuade her to travel with me; take her to Switzerland—somewhere—anywhere, out of your way. She shall never return—you understand?"

"Yes," Grace murmured, hoarsely, "and you must not come back yourself for a great while. I will send you money, and you must remain abroad."

"Why should I do that?" he asked vexed.

"The Earl detests you," she replied. "Your continual presence is a great trial to him. He is not over fond of me, and I believe the reason is because you are always around, and he is jealous of my affection for you."

"I wish the old dotard were dead," he muttered, brutally. "If he were only dead and

you had inherited the fortune, all would be safe. Since the heir will not marry you, you can gain nothing by waiting for his death if he lived a hundred years."

"That is true. I had never thought of it. I, too, wish that he were dead. I hate him," Grace said, clenching her small fists angrily.

"He is always lamenting that I do not resemble the Broughtons. He is vexed that I am not an Amazon, and am afraid to ride a great, prancing horse to the hunt with the fox-hunting squires around Waverley Hall. Diana's riding would set him wild with admiration, as her rescue of Arthur Delamere from the flood has already done. He has told me repeatedly that all the Broughtons were dark and brave."

"Well, he is very old. Let us hope that death will soon silence his whinings. Then I shall have my reward for all I have done for you, my beautiful darling. It should be a large one, for I have dared and accomplished much for the sake of winning all this for you."

"It shall be large," Grace replied. "Even to the half of my fortune."

They lingered awhile longer, laying their guilty plans against the beautiful and innocent Diana's peace and life, then separated, each returning to the hall by a different route.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE next afternoon the Earl in his courteous way expressed a desire for Diana to visit the picture gallery.

"Grace will be pleased to have you see the portraits of her illustrious ancestors," he said, giving a kind glance to his granddaughter, who had stood near and heard the invitation to her rival.

"Oh, yes!" Grace answered, carelessly. "I should like her to see the gallery; but I do not suppose she will care for the dark and queer-looking old fogies you call my ancestors. But there are some pretty, simple, fancy things, by clever artists there, that she may appreciate."

The Earl felt annoyed at the spiteful speech, but he showed no trace of his vexation on his stern, handsome old face. Already he had heard something that morning, that had filled his mind with terror and suspicion.

He had come in from his early morning walk, and gone into a charming little alcove, curtained off from the library by thick and heavy curtains of fringed Persian silk. He had thrown himself on a luxurious silken couch, and, yielding to the feebleness and weariness of old age, had fallen asleep.

He was awakened by the sound of voices in the library. It seemed as if Diana had come into the library, and Grace had followed her.

"Diana," said Grace, in a high, imperious voice, "what are you doing in here alone?"

The Earl lay still, listening dreamily for the pleasant voice of the charming young visitor he admired so much.

"Nothing, Grace," the clear, sweet voice replied; "I only came in here this moment for a book Mrs. Delamere was so kind as to recommend me to read."

"Mrs. Delamere has installed you as her prime favorite, I presume?" sneered the heiress. "Where have you acquired your taste for reading, Diana? You used not to be fond of it, I remember. Have you been at school?"

"Yes," Diana said, tranquilly.

"Where?" Grace asked with a start.

"I spent the year of our separation at the best school in Liverpool," Diana replied, with perfect calmness. "And you ought not to grudge me that, as you received your own education at my father's expense, while I was suffered to run wild, untutored, and uncared for as a little savage."

"Your father has already explained the reason to you, Diana," the heiress said, sharply. "He was too poor to afford us both a good education, and thought it only just that I should receive the superior advantages, in order to fit me for the position I might some day take as the Earl's granddaughter and heiress."

"Certainly," Diana assented, in a tone of keen and polished sarcasm.

Its sharpness cut Grace like a knife.

"Allow me to congratulate you upon having obtained a smattering of education that makes you appear presentable, at least," she said. "Your balcony scene with Arthur Delamere last night was very fine."

"Grace! you were mean enough to listen?" cried Diana, in dismay.

"I could not well avoid it," Grace said, coolly. "I was just inside the window. And let me tell you, Miss Hypocrite, that you need not think to win my lover from me by your artful wiles. We are to be married soon, and I hope you will see the propriety of letting him alone."

"You do me an injustice," Diana said, with a reproachful glance. "If you heard all we said, Grace, you must have heard him avow his love for me. I did not encourage him—you know that, Grace. If I had, I think he would have forgotten everything else but me."

Grace was so enraged by the girl's straightforwardness she could not speak for the moment.

Diana went on a little complainingly,—

"You have been unjust to me always, Grace, harsh and unkind always. Why is it? When we were sisters I tried to be loving and kind to you, but you always repulsed me except when you had some selds motive in view. Since I have come to England you treat me more unbecomingly than ever. What harm do I do you? Why did you push me into the lake that day?"

"I push you into the lake? You must be mad!" cried Grace, in breathless alarm and anger. "Has Arthur Delamere dared to tell you—"

"He has told me nothing. No one needed to tell me," Diana said, spiritedly. "You deliberately tried to drown me. I distinctly felt you give me a furtive push with your hand; then you whirled the boat around quickly before I could recover my balance. Grace, what had I done that you should seek my poor life?"

"Girl, you speak falsely! How dare you bring such a charge against me, the Earl of Waverley's granddaughter?" cried the heiress, clenching her little fists in wrath and hatred. "Another word, and I will have you hunted from the Hall by my grandfather's dogs!"

Then Diana arose and faced the furious girl, with a proud, imperious scorn in her regal bearing and flashing eye.

"Grace," she said, in a clear, sharp, ringing voice, with a tone of power in it; "I should advise you not to attempt such a thing, for your own sake. Unpleasant circumstances might come to light. I tell you frankly, I suspect you of some underhand dealing with me. You and Mr. Rainsforth plotted for my life that night at the hotel when I ran away from you. Tuesday you boldly attempted my life. I have no doubt that you will make another attempt to kill me the first opportunity you have. It must be that I am in your way somehow, or you would not be so anxious to get rid of me. I warn you that I am on my guard against you, and I will unmask your wicked designs if I can."

She paused, breathless, after her brave defiance.

Grace regarded her, with parted lips and terrified face, for a moment; then she broke into a taunting laugh.

"You are mad—mad as a March hare, Diana Rainsforth!" she cried out, wrathfully. "I shall go and tell your father so, and have you consigned to a lunatic asylum, where you deserve to be this minute!"

With the words, she swept from the room. A minute later Diana followed her.

And that was what the Earl of Waverley heard as he lay crouching in the alcove, spell-bound by a nameless horror that would not let him speak nor move. What did it all mean? Was the brave and beautiful Diana mad, indeed, as Grace said, or was his fair and tender granddaughter, the descendant of the bravest

and noble Broughtons, the designing murderers—Diana's frank accusation had made her out to be?

CHAPTER XXII.

BEFORE the projected visit to the picture-gallery was made, Lady Melville sent for Diana to her room.

"My dear," she said, "before you go into the gallery I want you to put on the ruby silk with velvet trimmings, that I ordered for you in London."

Diana looked at her in some surprise, and the colour rose in her olive cheek.

"It is quite too fine for me," she began. "I am already indebted so much to you and Sir Harold for your kindness that—"

"Hush! not another word," the lady interrupted, with pleasant impatience. "You know that Harold and I do not consider our affectionate care for you in that light. I had a certain end in view when I ordered the dress made for you. The time has come for you to wear it."

Diana sighed deeply. Grace's deliberate attempt on her life had weighed heavily on her heart and spirit.

"Lady Melville," she said, "I am almost ready to ask you to take me away from here. Even if I am really the true heiress, as you think, I do not believe it can ever be proved. And my life is in hourly danger. Do you realize that?"

"Yes, Diana, I realize that fully," the lady answered, gravely, "but you must not feel afraid, dear, for we guard you too carefully for any secret harm to reach you, and your enemies would not dare attempt an open outrage. I know it is an unpleasant position for you, but I do not despair of proving you the Earl's granddaughter yet, although our only hope at present is in your great resemblance to the Broughtons. I do not think the Earl can help seeing it when once you stand side by side with the portraits of your noble race. Once get his suspicions awakened, and it may be we can force Rainsforth into the truth. It is strange how carefully the villain has covered up his tracks so that all of Harold's efforts to learn aught of his past have failed so persistently. But, my darling, I believe that success will yet be ours. Surely Heaven cannot permit such a guilty fraud to live."

"Mr. Rainsforth told me this morning that he had been making arrangements for a tour in Switzerland, and intended taking me with him," Diana said, with a troubled brow.

"And you—what did you tell him, dear?" the lady asked troubled also by this unexpected intelligence.

"I told him I had promised to remain sometime with you, with his kind permission," replied the young girl.

"That was well. You acted wisely," said Lady Melville. "We have to temporize with the wretch. We have to oppose fraud with fraud and cunning with cunning. On no account would I permit him to take you away. Why do you look so troubled, Diana?"

"I will tell you," the girl said, frankly. "I acted my part very well with Mr. Rainsforth, but I was not so successful in restraining myself with Grace. I have let her know that I suspected the fraud."

She related what had occurred in the library that morning, blushing that her high spirit and smarting sense of wrong had led her into such an unfortunate altercation with the fair impostor.

Lady Melville looked dismayed.

"I know you could not help it, Diana," she said. "Your nature is too frank and open to successfully sustain you in any contest where the real feelings of the heart are best concealed. But I very regret this quarrel. It will precipitate matters. Your enemies will be in the greatest haste now to consummate their designs against you."

Diana grew pale for a moment, and leaned against her friend. She was brave and true as steel. No outward danger could daunt her

brave spirit. But the hidden malice of her enemies, the horror of their secret conspiracy against her life thrilled her with a terrible dread. She was young, fair, she loved the beautiful bright world, and the kind friends Heaven had sent to her in her helplessness and despair. The thought of death—such a death as vaguely and mysteriously menaced her—terrified even her brave spirit.

"Do not be frightened, dear," Lady Melville said, kissing the pale cheek fondly. "No one shall harm you. Harold and I shall constantly be near you to guard and protect you now. Arthur Delamere watches, too, as was evidenced by his prompt rescue the day Grace tried to drown you."

The colour that had been banished by her fears returned now in a swift tide to Diana's cheek.

"Does—does Mr. Delamere know?" she asked, surprised.

"No; we have not confided in any one. Harold thought it best not to at present. But Arthur evidently suspects Grace's antagonism to you, and his fears and his love keep him on guard always against his vague foreboding of evil for you."

Diana made no answer. A thrill of shy, tremulous sweetness ran through her heart at Lady Melville's assertion of Mr. Delamere's care for her. How pleasant it was to know that her friend—her new friend, as she shyly called him in her thoughts—was keeping anxious watch that she should come to no harm from her foes.

"Diana, why are you blushing so?" the lady asked, teasingly. "Have you found out Arthur's secret, too? We all see that he is in love with you. And that is just as it should be. If the Earl's heir marries the Earl's granddaughter—all will go well."

"Mr. Delamere is engaged to marry Grace," answered Diana, trying to appear very grave and unconcerned.

"Who told you such a falsehood, Diana?" cried Lady Melville.

"Grace told me herself," answered Diana, and Lady Melville laughed scornfully.

"My dear, you should have known better than to believe her," she said. "It is not true. Mrs. Delamere told me herself that the Earl had desired Arthur to marry Grace, and he had flatly refused to entertain the idea."

A thrill of happiness, so sweet it was almost painful, ran through Diana's young heart at that blissful intelligence. She had not known how terribly she hated the thought of Arthur's marriage until now, when her whole being thrilled at the thought of her lover's freedom.

"Run to your maid now, and be dressed," said Lady Melville. "I will come in myself and see how she does your hair. I wish it arranged in a particular style to-day."

It seemed as if the proposition to visit the picture gallery was agreeable to all the family. Grace declared her intention of accompanying her grandfather and Diana. Mr. Rainsforth invited himself, with ready tact. One after another joined them as they proceeded to the long and spacious apartment where every artist of note was represented. They passed down the apartment to inspect the family portraits first, the Earl leading, Diana walking on one side of him, Grace on the other.

As they walked slowly along, the Earl pointing out his ancestors, rehearsing stories of their knightly deeds with a kindling eye, the difference between the blonde and brunette was more marked than ever before.

Grace looked bored beyond measure, though she tried her best to hide it under an affectation of pride and interest. Diana was bright, pleased, interested, her bosom thrilling with the inward consciousness that these brave men and beautiful women of whom the Earl told her such grand things were her own ancestors. They belonged to her; she belonged to them, though she might never be able to prove her claim.

Lady Melville had superintended her dress-

ing, as she declared she would. For the first time Diana had appeared richly dressed, and the stylish costume of bright, ruby-coloured silk and velvet, with picturesque dashes of fine black lace here and there, was marvellously becoming to her piquant brunette beauty. A full cluster of deep crimson roses was fastened in with the creamy lace that shaded her round, white throat. Her beautiful black hair was arranged in a shining coronal of braids, and confined beneath a fillet of dead gold.

Beautiful as everyone deemed her, no one was prepared for the dazzling effect Lady Melville had designed with such perfect taste. In her simple, girlish costumes of white they had thought Diana a lovely, artless, gentle girl. She had suddenly blossomed out into a brilliant and sparkling woman. The flush glowed deeper on her delicately rounded cheek; there was a soft and tender light of happiness in her eyes, but no one guessed what had brought it there.

From time to time the Earl turned a puzzled yet admiring look upon her. Something in her dusky loveliness had had a strange, haunting effect upon him from the first. It began to dawn upon him startlingly now.

They had gone more than half way through the list of portraits, when Grace, who looked very fair and pretty in a tasteful costume of blue and white, yawned dismally, and exclaimed:

"Diana, are you not tired of looking at all these grim dead-and-gone people? Let us go over to the other side and look at the beautiful angels, and Madonnas by the old masters."

Diana looked reluctant. The Earl broke in suddenly before she could reply:

"Do not coax her away, Grace, before she has seen your mother's portrait, and your own, which I had painted when you first came to me last year."

"Mine is a mere daub," Grace began, anxious to get them away before they proceeded farther.

The Earl interrupted her with a displeased look.

"Grace, you may return if you like," he said, with distinct displeasure, "but I propose to show our visitor all the family portraits, unless she is weary."

Grace cowed before his sudden sternness, and declared she had been jesting when she spoke, and was not willing to return yet. Diana emphatically declared her delight in inspecting the portraits, so they continued with no further remonstrances from Grace.

They paused at length before a full-length portrait of Grace, taken in a pretty, coquettish attitude. The picture was a very fair and pretty one, but the blonde impostor looked strangely out of place among the haughty, dark-eyed Broughtons. They were all noble and earnest-looking—the men brave and proud, the women like heroines, all of them. Grace's blonde, regular features, when transferred to canvas, without the charm of her delusive smiles, were utterly soulless and heartless. Diana glanced at it a moment, then turned silently to the next one. It was Lady Agatha, the Earl's youngest daughter, painted, as he explained to her, a year before she ran away and married Reginald Rainsforth.

Diana turned to look at the portrait she had so longed to see, then started back with such a startled cry as Eve might have uttered when she first beheld her reflected image in the brook.

Lady Melville's clever design in arranging her dress flashed over her.

For in the beautiful portrait of the Earl's youngest daughter she beheld her reflected image. The dark, soft eyes were there, the delicate, clear-cut features, the sweet yet spirited mouth, the dark braids bound with the golden fillet. About the slender, stately figure swept the graceful folds of the ruby silk and velvet; against the rounded whiteness of the throat nestled the bunch of vivid crimson roses. Diana caught her breath—it was like looking into a mirror.

The dark, stern Earl stood looking from the portrait to the vivid face of the startled girl.

"Miss Rainsforth," he said, slowly and meaningly, "you see the wonderful resemblance between Lady Agatha and yourself as plainly as I see it. It is marvellous."

Grace broke into a scornful, uneasy laugh.

"Oh, grandpapa!" she cried, "how can you imagine such a thing? Diana is no more like my dear, beautiful mamma than the man in the moon! It is only that she has dressed herself on purpose to look like the picture and delude you. Don't you see, grandpapa," she continued, shaking him by the arm as he continued gazing earnestly at Diana, "that her face is not the least bit like mamma's—only her dress?"

The Earl's dark eyes, full of a brooding trouble and vague suspicion, looked down at the imploring face of the fair impostor.

"Hush, Grace!" he said, abruptly. "I spoke only the truth, and you know it. Diana is the perfect image of my daughter Agatha at her age. Moreover, in her mind and spirit as well as her person, she resembles the Broughtons much more than you do."

Grace stared at him with wide, frightened blue eyes.

Mr. Rainsforth ventured to come forward from the group that stood around silently listening. He touched the Earl's arm.

"My lord," he said, "pray do not allow my daughter's silly prank in dressing herself like a picture to disturb you thus, and cause Lady Grace, your sweet granddaughter, such poignant distress. Diana has always been a freakish child. She has been to the gallery before to-day, and this costume, so like Lady Agatha's, was designed by her to startle you. There is no resemblance between the faces save that both are dark. You do my daughter and myself too much honour in ascribing to her a resemblance to the noble race of Broughtons."

The Earl looked at Diana. She was regarding her persecutor with curling lips and blazing eyes.

Lady Melville, Sir Harold, Arthur Delamere, and his mother had drawn near, and formed a protecting semi-circle about her.

"Diana, does this man speak the truth?" demanded the Earl. "Have you been in the gallery before? Is this dress a masquerade designed to startle me, as he declares?"

"My lord, he speaks falsely," Diana replied, firmly. "I have never been in the gallery until I entered it with you to-day."

The Earl looked around him at Diana's friends grouped fondly about her.

"Lady Melville," he said, "you were Agatha's dearest friend. Tell me, does not this girl resemble her marvellously?"

"My lord, she is Agatha's living image," was the eager, emphatic answer.

"And you, Harold—you were once her betrothed—you loved her so that you have lived unwedded for her sake—her image is enshrined in your heart. Does not Diana Rainsforth resemble her?"

He bowed and repeated his sister's words,—

"She is Agatha's living image."

The Earl waited for no more. He turned to Diana, and took her trembling hand in his own.

"I call you to all witness," he said, solemnly, "that a monstrous fraud has been perpetrated upon me by that false and deceitful man yonder. He has endeavoured to foist his own namby-pamby daughter upon me in place of my own brave, beautiful Diana, whose face, whose mind, whose every glance betrays the heritage of noble blood of which they have tried to cheat her. But I can no longer be deceived. Agatha speaks to me through the dark eyes of her daughter. This is my granddaughter—this brave and beautiful girl whose hands I hold in mine. Is it not so, Lady Melville?"

"My lord, I firmly believe it," said Lady Melville, emphatically.

Mr. Rainsforth made a step forward as if to tear Diana from the Earl's grasp.

"Diana, my love," he said, "come away, and do not sanction the Earl's folly by your coun-

tenance. See how deeply you are distressing your gentle cousin by your waywardness."

Grace had indeed thrown herself upon the floor at the Earl's feet, and with bitter tears was imploring him to recall his cruel and unjust words. He looked down at her with scorn.

"Get up, Grace," he said, "and go to your father. I utterly repudiate you. You are no granddaughter of mine. You are utterly unlike the Broughtons. I always felt it."

"It is false!" Grace cried, defiantly, looking around her to see if there was one left to espouse her part. "Oh! my friends, is it not dreadful for my own grandfather to insult me thus? But I will not be repudiated if there is any law in this land to defend the wronged! I will prove that he is old, weak, imbecile, doting, and that he has been deceived by this wretched girl!"

Mr. Rainsforth came forward suddenly.

"Lady Grace," he said, "allow me to conduct you to your room. This is no place for you among those who are deliberately seeking your ruin for the furtherance of their own schemes for wealth and aggrandizement."

(To be continued.)

FACETIE.

A MAN remarked in his will that he would give his executors one-half the estate if they would not steal the other half, and they were so sensitive that they would not serve.

"Does your Helen remind you of Helen of Troy?" she asked sweetly, as the sofa-springs flattened under a pressure of one hundred and sixty pounds. "No, not precisely. You remind me more of Helen of Avondupois," was the scaly reply.

A FLYER.—"Ma, what is an angel?" asked a little miss one day. "A being that flies," answered the mother. "But why does she call my governess an angel?" She doesn't fly. "Well," exclaimed the mother, "she is going to fly immediately."

MONEY IN HAND.—A literal-minded youngster was picked up by a visitor of the family, who, dandling him on his knee, said: "I wish I had this little boy; I think there is money in him." To which promptly responded the child: "I know there is, for I swallowed a farthing when I was at grandma's the other day."

THE STORY IS TOLD that Longfellow and Fields were making a short pedestrian tour some few years ago, when, to their surprise, an angry bull stood on the footpath, evidently determined to demolish both poet and publisher. "I think," said Fields, "that it would be prudent to give this reviewer a wide margin." "Yes," replied the poet; "it appears to be a disputed passage."

NOT A MUSICAL CROWD.—At a political meeting one of the gentlemen present arose and addressed the chairman as follows: "Misther Chairman how much money have we in the funds?" The chairman answered ten pounds. "I mek a motion, Misther Chairman, that we devote five pounds for buyin' a transparency." A delegate, rose and shouted in a stentorian voice: "I object, Misther Chairman, to any such unnecessary expense. There's not a man in the house knows how to play on wan."

EVERY DONKEY'S KNOWLEDGE.—A city toiler and his little son met a sturdy farmer in the country, whereupon the toiler remarked, "That's a fine field of oats you have there." "Don't you know the difference between oats and wheat?" asked the sturdy farmer, contemptuously. "No, I don't." "I thought every donkey knew that!" exclaimed the rustic. "You see, father," said the toiler's little boy, who had not taken any part in the debate, "if every donkey knows the difference, it's lucky you said you didn't."

Two prisoners were lately acquitted of a theft. The magistrate told them not to come there again, or they might not be so fortunate. One of the prisoners said: "No, your worship, we'll not come again; we should not have come now if we had not been brought."

"My case is just here," said a citizen to a lawyer. "The plaintiff will swear that I hit him. I will swear that I did not. Now, what can you lawyers make out of that if we go to trial?" "Two pounds easy," was the reply.

A YOUNG man having asked a girl if he might go home with her from singing-class and been refused, said:—"You are as full of airs as a music box." "Perhaps so," she retorted; "but if I am I don't go with a crank."

BECAUSE there were guests at dinner little Lucy had been told not to ask for anything. In serving a certain dish she was overlooked. A few minutes after her mother asked the maid to bring her a plate. "Will you have mine, mother dear?" said Lucy. "It's quite clean."

"Your daughter? Is it possible! Why, you look more like twin sisters." "No; I assure you she is my only daughter," replied the pleased mother. And the polite old gentleman spoiled it all by remarking, "Well, she certainly looks old enough to be your sister."

A YOUNG lady reading in a newspaper the other day of a girl having been made crazy by a sudden kiss, called the attention of her uncle, who was in the room, to that singular occurrence, whereupon the old gentleman gruffly demanded what the fool had gone crazy for. "What did she go crazy for?" archly returned the ingenuous maiden. "Why, for more, I suppose!"

COUNTRY MAID-SERVANT.—"Gae me a third-class return-ticket." Booking-clerk: "Where to please?" Country Maid-servant: "Never you mind that; gae me my ticket." Booking-clerk: "But you must say where you're going." Country Maid-servant: "I want nae o' yer impudence; you've nae business what I'm gann." Booking-clerk gives in, and quietly boots her to the nearest terminus.

HIRING A JUDGE TO ADVERTISE.—When the defendant took the stand, his Honour said: "Prisoner, you are charged with having removed the goblet from the hand of the Gogswell statue, substituting a pair of two-bit suspenders, with a placard calling attention to your establishment across the way." "Well, shudge," replied the offender, with an ingratiating smile, "of gorse I want to get along in peeshees." "After which," continued the court, sternly, "you substituted a lot of neckties for the suspenders, and attached to the other hand a lot of bills referring to your new stock of gum shoes and hair oil." "Dose hair oil is fast rate, your honour," said the defendant. "I should like to sell you a bottle." "And yesterday," continued the court, consulting the indictment, "you obstructed the thoroughfare and created a disturbance by placing a paper collar and a plug hat on the statue in question." "Dose plug hats is cheap at four dollars, shudge. Moses Levi charges five and a half vor dem same kind," returned the trader, cheerfully; "I beats dose fellers every dime." "And at night," went on his Honour, "at night you place in the figure's hand a transparency containing a further advertisement of your wares. Now, this is most improper and reprehensible." "Dot's right, shudge," said Mr. Solomon, delightedly. "Pitch into me, off you please. Shpeak loud, so dose noospaper vellers can hear you," and he smiled benignantly upon the reporters. "Great heavens!" thundered the court, as a frightful idea struck him. "Is it possible you have the audacity to use the machinery of this court as an advertising dodge?" "Dot's it, dot's it, shudge!" exclaimed the cheap John, rubbing his hands exultantly. "I swore ood der complaint myself!"—*San Francisco Post.*

SOCIETY.

The preparations for the approaching Royal wedding at Darmstadt on the 16th of April are being busily carried on; the bridegroom-elect, Prince Louis of Battenberg, is now in Germany arranging preliminaries.

PRINCE GEORGE OF WALES has been received with the utmost enthusiasm at every place where the *Canada* has visited during her West Indian cruise. At St. Kitt's, after a cricket match, the Prince found great difficulty in getting away from the ground, as an immense crowd of natives swarmed all-around, shouting and cheering like maniacs. At Antigua the Prince distinguished himself in a cricket match, and also in the "Officers" Derby, which was ridden on donkeys in fancy costumes.

The infant daughter of the Archduke Charles, of the Tuscan branch of the Hapsburgs, was christened in the Archduke's Palace in Vienna, the Emperor and Empress (the latter in a robe of mauve brocade, embroidered in silver), the Crown Prince and Princess, and almost all the members of the Imperial family being present. The tiny Archduchess received the name of Maria Annunziata, the ex-Duchess of Modena standing as godmother.

While hunting with the Earl of Guildford's hounds near Derechester, a serious accident happened to Miss A. Weston, of Charrminster. After taking part in several good runs she was about to take a ditch, when she was thrown from her horse, which trampled on her, breaking an arm and inflicting other injuries.

"KATH GREENHAWAY PARTIES" have been introduced among Transatlantic Carnival gaieties, where the guests wear the quaint old-fashioned costumes depicted in the familiar æsthetic picture-books. Talking of American society, a very curious Leap-Year ball has been given in Philadelphia. The host sent out the invitation, and the ordinary state of things was so reversed, that not only did the ladies escort the gentlemen, ask them to dance, and give them flowers; but Leap-Year costumes were adopted, ladies wearing men's coats, masher collars, shirt-fronts and ties, with their ordinary ball-skirts, while men carried fans, some wore earrings, and many had feminine bodies and short sleeves.

So far as can be gathered the yachting season of 1884 promises to be a very interesting one, and we shall have out possibly the finest fleet of first class cutters we have seen for many years, all, too, hand-mailed. What Marjorie under a new mainsail will do with the new craft we cannot well determine, but with O'Neil in the new one, building to Richardson's designs for Mr. Jameson, Captain Duncan will find his work well out for him. This will be the first new vessel that O'Neil ever handled, as he has always succeeded to what a racing man would call "platers," and sailed them into the top of the winning list. No doubt, therefore, he will take all out of the boat that is in her.—*Society*.

The bridal dress of Miss Lawes was of rich ivory satin, trimmed with Brussels point lace, the long train being lined with striped watered silk brocade; the veil, which was of antique Brussels point, was fastened over a wreath of real orange blossoms, with diamond stars. She was attended by two little train-bearers dressed in red plush, while the ten bridesmaids wore costumes of salmon pink nun's veiling, with bodies of brocaded satin of the same colour, trimmed with coffee-coloured lace, pink tulle veils, and feather aigrettes. They carried pink feather and lace fans and bouquets, the gift of the bridegroom, Mr. G. C. Twissleton Wykeham Frennes (Royal Scots Fusiliers). The ceremony, which took place at St. Mark's, North Audley-street, was performed by the venerable Lord Saye and Sele, Archbishop of Hereford, grandfather of the bridegroom.

STATISTICS.

THE making of cider is one of the important industries of France. There are now in that country more than 4,000,000 cider apple trees, which, if planted side by side, would line a boulevard 15,000 miles long. The average annual product is more than 220,000,000 gallons. The best cider is made in Normandy. It is dark-brown in hue, and is mixed with water for drinking or bottling. The second best quality is made in Breton. It is of a bright amber colour, and is also esteemed too strong to be drunk "neat."

THE following are the relative sizes of various encyclopedias compared with the Bible, printed matter being measured by "m's":—The Bible contains 3,500,000 m's; Webster's Dictionary, 20,000,000; Zell's Cyclopaedia, 35,000,000; Chambers's Cyclopaedia, 48,000,000; Johnson's Cyclopaedia, 56,000,000; Appleton's Cyclopaedia, 60,000,000; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 123,000,000; Larousse (French), 456,000,000. These figures are based on careful calculations, which have been verified.

LOSS OF LIFE AT SEA.—The report of the Board of Trade as to the loss of life at sea from British ships during the years 1871 to 1882 inclusive shows that as many as 33,722 persons lost their lives on British ships during that period. Of these 35,660 were seamen, and 3,062 passengers. The worst year of this period is 1873, when 4,279 persons were drowned, and the best, 1878, when the number was 2,392.

GEMS.

NOTHING is so great an instance of ill-manners as flattery. If you flatter all the company, you please none. If you flatter only one or two, you affront the rest.

WHEN you are looking at a picture, you give it the advantage of a good light. Be as courteous to your fellow-creatures as you are to a picture.

LETTERS of introduction are not always successful to get a man into society, any more than eloquent obituaries to get a man into heaven.

A MAN need need only correct himself with the same rigor that he apprehends others, and excuse others with the same indulgence that he shows to himself.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

GLOSS ON LINEN.—A tablespoonful of powdered gum arabic to every pint of starch will give a beautiful gloss to cuffs and collars.

RICE CAKE.—Six ounces of rice-flour, six ounces of wheat-flour, twelve ounces of pounded loaf-sugar, eight eggs, the juice and grated peel of one lemon. To be whipped well one hour, and baked one hour.

WATERPROOF CLOTHING.—Waterproof clothing which allows a free passage for respiration can be prepared by dipping in a solution of acetate of alumina. The latter is made by adding a solution of acetate of lead to a solution of alum, and decanting the mixture from the sulphate of lead which is precipitated. The articles are dipped into this liquid and allowed to dry without wringing them.

A GOOD POUND-CAKE.—Take rather more than one pound of flour, one pound of currants, one ounce of butter, one ounce of powdered loaf sugar, one-quarter pound of mixed peel, eight eggs, half a teaspoonful of sal-volatile, ten drops of essence of lemon. Warm the butter a little, then beat it into a cream; add one egg at a time, beating it up well first; add the sugar, beating that also into the ingredients, and then gradually add the flour, mixing it well for more than half-an-hour.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE first town to be entirely lighted and have its tramcars driven by electricity will be Montreux, on the Lake of Geneva, a company having obtained a concession for the purpose. The motive power will be derived from the water of the lake.

MR. BARNUM's "sacred white" elephant was to leave England on the 13th of March. During the animal's stay in England more than 90,000 visitors have passed the turnstiles at the Zoological Gardens.

SCRAMBLERS.—A scrambling wife is no light cross to a man who values order and regularity as part of his home life. She may be, and probably is, the best-tempered creature in the world—a peevish scrambler would be too unendurable—but a fresh face, bright eyes, and a merry laugh do not atone for never-ending disorder and discomfort. This kind of thing does not depend on income, and is not to be remedied by riches. The households where my lady has nothing to do but to let her maid keep her to the hours she herself has appointed are just as uncomfortable in their way as poorer establishments if my lady is a scrambler, and cannot be taught method and the value of holding on by the forelock.

COLLECTORS of postage stamps have long had to guard carefully against the danger of paying large prices for skilful copies of rare issues, and now, it appears, bibliophiles must confront a similar deceit, a firm in Düsseldorf having taken out a patent for its process of imitating old books. They print with old-fashioned types upon hand-made paper, which has been saturated with an aniline solution, and then sprinkled the pages with various dyes that give them an aged and mouldy appearance. Finally when the sheets have been bound up into a volume, the edges of the leaves are steeped in spirit and fired; and it is said that after a reprint has undergone this treatment it is all but impossible for anyone, unless he makes use of chemical tests, to distinguish the forgery from an original. In order to obtain a patent the Düsseldorf firm have probably convinced the authorities that their own immediate intentions are honest, but some of their successors are sure to be scoundrels.

COACHES IN THE DAYS OF GEORGE IV.—Hackney-coaches, says a writer, were drawn by horses, for the most part miserable-looking creatures, which it would have been cruelty to urge to any speed, though I fancy they were capable of keeping up their jog-trot for a considerable time. The drivers were usually elderly men, attired in stone-coloured great-coats with many capes. I also just remember two or three sedan-chairs waiting for hire near the old squares at the west end of the town; but they were worn and shabby, though with likeness enough of their better selves to recall Hogarth's pictures to mind. There were stage-coaches from certain central points to the suburbs running several times a day, but seldom starting on their last journey later than half-past eight o'clock p.m. Small chance was there of procuring a place in the "last coach" from any suburban district without the preliminary ceremony of booking it. There was always however, and at all hours of the day, one hope—though often a forlorn one—for the tired wayfarer, and this was a "return chaise." The phrase, familiar enough fifty or sixty years ago, has no meaning now; but when railways were not, and the wealthier classes travelled chiefly by aid of post-horses, the empty post-chaise, on its return journey, was often to be seen on the high-road. The postilion, be sure, always kept his eyes open to catch any sign from a pedestrian going the same way, for it was a common thing for the roomy yellow chaise to halt and a little bargain to be struck, in accordance with which the pedestrian obtained a "lift."

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- ELLA.—We do not know the title or address.
- CORRIE N.—We know of none that can be relied on.
- G. B.—1. Yes. 2. The story you name is not in book form.
- R. R.—Yes, but what the salaries are we cannot say. Write a note to the address of the companies.
- K. F.—The Translation of "La Priere D'Une Vierge" is "The Prayer of a Virgin."
- F. D.—The colour of the hair inclosed to us is auburn, or reddish brown.
- ADA.—Practice will greatly improve your handwriting.
- VL.—Ask a bookseller or newsagent in your neighbourhood to get the books.
- F. B. C.—January 18, 1880, came on Friday; March 30, 1883, on Thursday.
- TRAVELLER.—M. Thiers abolished the passport system in France on the 10th April, 1872, in compliance with the wish of the English Government.
- ERNIE.—Select a more appropriate present, reserving the ring until you are engaged to the lady, who did not act improperly when she refused to accept it.
- C. R.—On all occasions such as you describe, the intimate friends of the lady are expected to represent her; of course receiving from her general instructions regarding the entertainment.
- S. D.—We cannot recognise the origin of the lines sent, on account of their incompleteness. If the whole stanza was presented, it is likely it would not be so difficult to answer your question.
- EMERALDA.—1. The hair is light brown in colour, of exceedingly fine texture, and doubtless makes a fitting frame for your pretty face. 2. Handwriting is irregular, and a little too large for a lady.
- E. E.—The word is not to be found in any Greek, Latin, or English dictionary. It is not very plainly written, but all the words which it resembles have been searched for with no satisfactory result.
- L. M. C.—George Washington was born near the banks of the Potomac, in Westmoreland County, Virginia. 2. Black ink is the most lasting of all writing fluids.
- POLLIE PRICHARD.—Cards for christening parties are now sometimes sent out written on the back of the photograph of the little one who was to be given a name.
- C. S.—Select as a topic for debate any of the leading questions of the day, such as the advantages of a republican form of government as compared with those of a monarchy; does capital punishment check crime? &c.
- J. J.—1. As the bill of fare is left to the judgment and taste of those who act as caterers, it is unnecessary to go into details. 2. Small tables, a sitting four or five persons, are now used quite generally at fashionable gatherings.
- D. F. G.—At dinner, in passing your plate for anything, unless the table is provided with rests for them, you should leave your knife and fork upon it; for to hold them in your hand is awkward, and to lay them on the tablecloth might soil it.
- C. M. R.—1. From the sample lock sent us, one is inclined to believe you possess a wealth of golden-brown tresses, which no doubt are envied by your less favoured friends. 2. Your birthday, July 27, 1870, came on a Wednesday. 3. Femminish excellent.
- W. J. R.—On the contrary, we think it would be very imprudent for you to do so. Hundreds of persons have from time immemorial been reduced from comparative wealth to poverty by trying to "treble" their incomes in the way you mention.
- A. M.—1. For one so young your writing is beautiful. 2. The lock of hair is of a pretty auburn tint, and is doubtless an object of admiration in the eyes of your friends. 3. A well-developed girl of sixteen should be about 5 feet 2 inches high.
- INQUIRER.—Yes, one of the most remarkable things about paper is its strength. As an illustration of this a note of the Bank of England twisted into a kind of rope can suspend 329 pounds without being injured in the least.
- J. D. T.—Wait for three years at least before thinking of marrying the young girl who, at the early age of fifteen, would not be able to attend to the arduous duties of matrimony. It is not likely that one so young can be really in love with any man, although she may think so.
- ROBY.—Many uses have been found for dyes outside the textile kingdom, but perhaps the most remarkable discovery for their utility has just been made by an English chemist. It has for a long time been known that the colour of growing flowers can be altered by simply mixing a little dye-stuff with the molar in the flower-pot. No one, however, has hitherto thought of changing the colour of flowers when cut. There are in London many artists whose business it is to give to birds finer feathers than Nature has allowed them, and they have now a counterpart in flowers. Mr. Nesbit, a distinguished botanist, has found that by simply soak-

ing the stems of cut flowers in a weak dye solution, their colour can be altered at will, without the perfume or freshness being destroyed. Most beautiful effects are produced by prepared lakes. Singular to say, flowers refuse to absorb certain colours, while they dispose of others in different manners. If placed in a mixed solution they make a complete analysis, and some tints that had been treated with purple showed distinct red and blue veins, the colours having been divided in the process of absorption.

P. R.—Holland, in the last three centuries, has recovered from the sea at least 50,000 acres. The Lake of Harlem became *terra firma* between 1840 and 1853, and the Zuider Zee is in process of transformation into 500,000 valuable acres.

TOM R.—Crystals of oxygen have recently been obtained in Paris by first liquefying the gas under great pressure, and then suddenly removing the pressure. The temperature of the liquid mass is thus greatly lowered, and crystals of oxygen are formed in it.

P. D. M.—The Portuguese are said to have been the first to import tea into Europe, and were acquainted with it early in the sixteenth century. In 1664 it is recorded that the English East India Company made the Queen of England what was considered the brilliant present of two pounds of tea.

C. L. N.—Amber is a hard, light-yellow substance, often clouded with white, supposed to be the hardened gum of a kind of pine tree not now in existence. It is found in small quantities in many parts of the world, as on the coasts of the Adriatic Sea and Sicily, in Siberia and Greenland, and some few places in this country along the Atlantic coast.

SOMETIMES.

Sometimes in my life's early morning,
Sweet dreams of the future there came;
Dreams of a future immortal,
Of a life full of glory and fame;
But the sweet dreams of childhood are over,
And awakened by thoughts more sublime,
My laurels I'll reap at Death's river,
As I cross its dark water sometime.

Sometimes, when my soul is weary
And burdened with care and woe,
I wander alone by the streamlet,
And list to its musical flow;
And I fancy the voice of an angel
Blends with its musical chime
Awaking my soul from its slumber
With its notes of the sweet sometime.

Sometimes I think of a loved one
Who has passed from mortal sight,
Born away in the arms of the angels,
Away to the mansions of light:
Up the golden stair, unfettered,
His world-weary feet may climb;
I, too, shall mount it, beside him,
In the distant, yet near, sometime.

C. G.

EM.—By all means marry the man you love, and thus pave the way to lifelong happiness. You are doubtless mistaken in your idea concerning this gentleman, as it is not at all likely he would have made the proposal of marriage unless he loved you sincerely. Rich men have often married poor working girls, and found them fit for companions, more so, in some cases, than those which could have been chosen from their own ranks.

ERVIE.—1. You are almost too young to do any work at present, and it would, therefore, be advisable to stick to your studies for a few years. 2. The proper treatment of the nails consists in the daily use of a finger-brush, with which to polish them, and in carefully paring them with a sharp knife in a slight curve, leaving the upper border of the nail projecting a line beyond the extremity of the finger. If cut too close the ends of the fingers become stubby.

LAZZER.—To make patent yeast, simmer six ounces of hops in three gallons of water for three hours; strain it, and in ten minutes stir in half a peck of ground malt. Next reboil the hops in water, and add the liquor to the mash already made, which must be well stirred up, covered over, and left for four hours, then drain off the wort, and when cooled down to 90 degrees Fahrenheit, set it to work with one pint of yeast (patent is best); after standing for twenty-four hours, take off the scum, strain it through a coarse hair sieve, and it will be ready for use.

LITTLE LADY.—The exact date of the invention of sugar is lost in the mist of fable. However, sugar is said to have been known to the Chinese three thousand years ago, and there is not much doubt but that the manufacture of the article was carried on under the Tsin dynasty two hundred years before Christ. A strong claim for priority has been made for India. Probably the Hindus learned the art from the Chinese, and from India the knowledge was carried further west. Three hundred and twenty-five years before Christ, Alexander sent Nearchus with a large fleet down the Indus to explore the adjacent countries. When that officer returned from his expedition he brought to Greece an account of honey (sugar) which the Asiatics made from cane, without any assistance from bees. This was the earliest idea the western nations had of sugar, the Jews, Egyptians, Babylonians, and Greeks knowing nothing of its use. As late as A.D. 120 sugar was prescribed by Galen, the famous physician, as a medicine. Before the discovery of

America sugar was a costly luxury, used only on rare occasions. During the wars of the Roses, about 1455, Margaret Paston wife of a wealthy country gentleman of Norfolk, wrote to her husband, begging that he would "vouchsafe" to send her a pound of sugar. As late as the year 1700 all England consumed only twenty million pounds in the course of the year, but since the consumption has greatly increased, twenty million hundredweights now being used by the English people. The process of refining sugar was not known in England previous to 1659. That was probably an invention of the Arabs. A Venetian merchant earned the secret from the Saracens of Sicily, and sold the art for one hundred thousand crowns.

SADIE.—If you like the young man, why not invite him to call on you? There is no reason for doubting his word as to the occupation in which he is engaged. Book-keepers in banks, if the newspapers are to be believed, are generally comfortably situated financially, although they do not enjoy such great advantages as the cashiers in such institutions. You will doubtless find out in good time whether he is in a position to warrant marriage.

AMINA.—Flowers on a morning table are especially suitable to the time. They look like the happy waking of the creation; they bring perfumes of the breath of Nature into your room; they seem the representations and embodiments of the very smiles of your home, the graces of its good-morrow, proofs that some intellectual beauty is in ourselves or those about us—some house Aurora, helping to strewn our life with sweets. By all means encourage the love of flowers.

S. D. E.—1. Meerschaum is a mineral existing in many parts of the world. In Europe, it is found chiefly at Brubachitz, in Moravia, and at Sobotsch and Kaffa, in the Crimea. In Asia it occurs abundantly in the district of Natolia; and in the rocks of Eski-Hissar, in the same district, it is mined so extensively as to give employment to nearly a thousand men. The most artistic and expensive pipes, cigar-holders, and other articles made from this material, come from Vienna.

F. F. D.—You are quite right. In the history of the Smithfield Club, 1883 will be spoken of as "The Queen's year." Her Majesty having accomplished a feat altogether unparalleled by any exist it or in the annals of live stock competitions—namely, winning all three of the champion honours awarded in the cattle classes. The Queen took the £50 silver cup for the best steer or ox, the £50 silver cup for the best heifer or cow, and the Champion Plate of 100 guineas for the best bull in the show.

F. G.—In singing, the head should be held erect and the chest well expanded, to allow free play to the lungs and free emission of the voice from the throat. The tongue should be kept still, slightly pressing on the lower teeth. If possible, engage a teacher thoroughly conversant with the art, who will train you, and explain various technicalities not found in books on the subject, such as the proper regulation of the breath, the articulation of the words, &c.

L. T.—Write the following lines in the album of your adored one:—

"Die when you will, you need not wear
At heaven's court a form more fair
Than beauty here on earth has given.
Keep but the lovely looks we see,
The voice we hear, and you will be
An angel ready-made for heaven."

X. Y. Z.—1. We cannot give any information concerning the preparation of opium for smoking purposes. It is a most pernicious habit, and should be decried by every person having the public good at heart. 2. Persistent shaving will probably result in producing the coveted beard. There is no preparation known that if applied to the face will cause the beard or moustache to grow to any appreciable extent. 3. Do not ask for the photograph on such a slight acquaintance, but wait until you have become personally familiar.

CHERRY.—1. Ordinary beer yeast may be kept fresh and fit for use for several months by placing it in a close canvas bag, and gently squeezing out the moisture in a screw press until the remaining matter becomes as stiff as clay, in which state it must be preserved in close vessels. 2. Beer yeast is also used in the form of powder, or in cakes, by mixing it with flour or Indian meal and drying it. It is usual to allow the paste to ferment after the yeast has been added to the flour. For this last process we have no formula.

THE LONDON READER, Post-free. Three-half-pence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Eightpence.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS and VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of all booksellers.

NOTICE.—Part 259, Now Ready, price Sixpence, post-free, Eightpence. Also Vol. XLII, bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 234, Strand, W.C.

††† We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

London: Published for the Proprietor, at 234, Strand, by J. R. BRICK, and Printed by WOODFALL and KENDRA, Milford Lane, Strand.